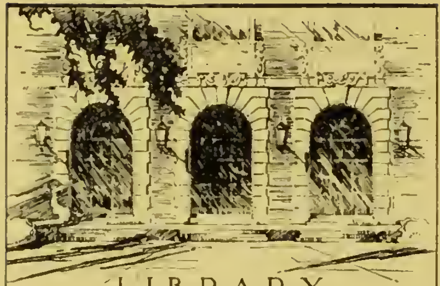

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THE PEASANT IN NINETEENTH CENTURY FICTION

BY

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY

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"Les Romans Champêtres" of George Sand.

Although France has a much better defined class of peasantry than England, her literature, and especially her fiction, had been, until almost the middle of the last century, curiously lacking in the peasant type of characters. Prosateurs evidently thought the subject of the rustic unworthy of their pains, until as one outcome of Rousseauistic thinking and the "Romantic Imagination," it was brought before the public by George Sand, in her charming pastorals. Even the cynical Mr. Babbitt, after contrasting her "kingdom of dreams" with Balzac's "empire of Chimeras," concedes that "her idealized peasants are not any further from the truth and are certainly more agreeable than the peasants of Balzac."[1.] George Sand herself realized, I think, that her characters were idealized, but she considered this an exaggeration toward truth; it did not come, M. Zola points out,[2.] from a lack of observation but rather, by a deliberate *use* of the real for a purpose. It is strange that M. Zola, himself a follower of Balzac, and a supreme realist, should hail this opposing literary figure as a "worker of progress, the apostle of a blessed existence." She explains her deliberate idealization, herself, as a manifestation of conscious artistry: "If the artist remains *below* his thought and yours, if he has disregarded in human types the imprint of Divinity under a sordid interpretation, condemn him; but if, in studying the real conscientiously, he has respected the nobility of the celestial origin, do not search around

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[1.] Babbitt, Irving, "Rousseau and Romanticism": p. 107.
[2.] Zola, Emile, "Documents Litteraires": p. 195 ff.

you for the names and the traits of the models. They exist without doubt, in reality, because nothing is invented outside of what the senses can perceive, and even the gods present themselves to the imagination under human features; but, in translating themselves under the hand of a true artist, these models, fine or common, ferocious or gentle, enter into a new life in the form of striking abstractions and of imperishable types."[1]

Later she says that art was not a study of positive reality, but a search for ideal truth. In "Questions d' Art et de Littérature," she expresses her resolve to paint only those objects and men that have appealed to her sympathies, and insomuch as this personal element - the understanding of creatures as she knew them - replaced wild abstractions, her work ceased to be "a loose and lyric flow of innumerable words,"[2] and became, in its simplicity, a study of life.

Out of her own intimate experience with peasant life, I believe, came George Sand's picture of them. She told Flaubert, once, of having entertained a certain Norman comedian -" a true Norman who sang for us the true songs of the paysans in their own language," She remarked that there is there an unknown mine of masterpieces of their kind.[3]" Whether or not she ever used such a secondary source for the thoughts or motives of her characters, it is certain that she knew these rustic people as some of her best friends." She tells the life-story of a neighbor at Nohant, Pierre Bonnin, who neither knew how to read nor write, but who was a marvellous and

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[1] "Jean de la Roche": Avant-Propos.
[2] Strachey, G. L., "French Literature": p. 223.
[3] Correspondence avec Flaubert: p. 123.

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untiring workman. When she paid him what he felt to be her last visit - for he was then a weak old man - he told her simply, "I enjoyed labor. I have nothing to regret but loss of health, and one other thing, which was fated not to be! I should have liked to be a soldier, and become a general, an emperor! "

His restless energy led her to believe that in him were neglected powers, and she wondered what a man Pierre might have been had he been given a man's chance.

Amantine-Lucile-Aurore Dupin - for so she was christened - was born of an aristocratic, even noble family. Her young soldier father, however, had shown his independent and democratic spirit by marrying Mlle. Sophie Delaborde, a daughter of the people. Her father had been a bird-seller in Paris, and she had led a somewhat questionable existence on the city streets. The dashing and romantic Captain Dupinwas killed in 1808, when Aurore was but four years old, and she was immediately taken by her grandmother, at Nohant, with whom she spent her girlhood days. Nohant was destined, moreover, to be her own home in later years and it is this old Manor-house, in the isolated little province of Berry, which binds her to the peasant life she knew and loved so well. Her childhood playmates were the untutored offspring of the unlettered country-folk around Nohant. "We watched the herds,"she said," that is to say, we did not watch at all, and, while the goats and sheep foraged in the young wheat, we formed square danses, or better, we tasted, together, on the grass, our flat cakes, our cheesé. The pears and the wild apples, the grapes, the ripe fruit - all was regal to us!"[1] She knew

[1] Historic de ma Vie, Vol III: p. 31.

"Fanchon, Pierrot, Rosette and Sylvain;" they romped together over the fields, telling one-another the tales heard at their respective fire-places. This close intimacy of her childhood made her instinctively understand the peasant's heart, and bound her sympathies to them forever. "It was there,"[1] said M. Moselly," that her soul opened up to that marvellous comprehension of the rustic soul - simple, patient, robust. Strange stories, terrible legends haunted these primitive imaginations, legends born from the noises heard in the twilight, of forms who were believed mysteriously to inhabit the air, crickets, corcerers, wild beasts, wolf-drivers, and nocturnal washer-women. All the people of these qpparitions filed before the eyes of the frightened child and her work, later, was penetrated by this mystery. The author's nature pictures of the peasant are coloured by an unconscious expression of her philosophical ideas, but the best parts of them are evidences of a sincere love that had been instilled in her in early childhood. Thus the peasant to her, then, could never become a creature worthy of interest and observation or even of pity; her sympathy for him was profound; she considers him her equal and worthy her estime and love.

Aurore's education was, on the whole, quite desultory. She had a tutor, Deschartes, and had, as a fellow-student, a peasant-girl, Ursule. Her patrician grandmother was a disciple of Jean Jacques Rousseau and she applied his educational doctrines to Aurore. The règime of open-air exercise and careless freedom for children was manifesting its vogue as a reaction from the stern discipline of classical training. The grandmother had renounced the Catholic

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1. Moselly, Emile, "Les Femmes Illustres."

faith and was what was vaguely known as a Deist, but the child had had no religious training at all, and had constructed for herself a primitive philosophy. This happy-go-lucky existence, however, was rudely checked, when, at the age of thirteen, Aurora was sent to the Convent des Anglaises in Paris. She remained there but three years, but during that time she was once the leader of a band of "diables" and was known as "Madcap," and again was thrown into a violent state of relifious asceticism. Mme. Dupin removed her because the enthusiastic child was threatning to become a nun.

Her unhappy marriage, which was an "affaire de convenance," and its unhappy consequences, are known to all who have ever read anything of her life. Sone critics have wondered if we should ever have heard of George Sand, the literary figure, had her life with M. Dudevant been happy and her days spent quietly at Nohant, however; her misfortune in the match may have been the good fortune of the reading world. She had two children - Maurice and Solange, but soon after the latter's birth in 1828, she obtained permission from her husband to go to Paris to work on the staff of the Figaro with an old friend, Jules Sandeau. This step was a desperate attempt to earn money; she had already tried painting, and had failed. In 1831, Sandeau and Mme. Dudevant published, together, a novel, "Rose et Blanche" under the assumed title "Jules Sand." Notwithstanding its poor construction and its stupendous improbability, this novel became immensely popular, so much so that, taking the non-du-plume of "George Sand," Mme. Dudevant published her first novel, "Indiana" in 1832. Thus began a series of social - even socialistic - romances, which, although popular among a revolutionary public at

the time of publication, will not stand the test of logical argument and which would have been better stories, had the wild ravings of unwholesome radicalism been omitted. About then, M. René Doumic, the eminent nineteenth century critic, says, "George Sand has more genius than talent. Her social theories are ludicrous; she is not what Mme. du Staël would call an 'écrivain penseur.' The humanitarian, socialistic and revolutionary doctrines seem to her to give form to that instinct of pity that is within her."[1.]

In the case of the first group of socialistic novels, which deal with the question of marriage, this "instinct of pity" for others of her sex, must have been closely bound to a realization of her own marital plight. Indiana is a young, temperamental girl who was ill-mated to a tyrannical old colonel and exposed to the seductions of his diabolical friend, Lovelace. She was saved in the end by her chivalrous cousin, Ralph. "Valentine" is another story of an unhappy marriage, but in neither it or "Indiana" does the author directly scorn existing institutions.

In 1833 Mme. Sand met the poet, Alfred de Musset, and, after a mad love experience of six months, in Italy, she returned to Paris, outwardly unembittered; but in that year appeared "Lélia"and "Jacques", the culmination of this first series of her novels, and the ones in which appear her most dangerous social theories, and which show a bitter revolt against things as they are. At the apex of the course of this unsettled thinking, the hero Jacques cries, "I do not doubt but that marriage should be abolished if the human race would make any progress toward justice and reason; a bond more human and

1. "Théories Sociales de George Sand: Preface.

no less sacred will replace it and will insure the existence of children who will be born of one man and one woman, without ever destroying the liberty of either."

Fortunately - and characteristically, too - Mme. Sand turned from this unstable morbidity, which was only destructive in nature, and became a political radical, hoping that, by legislation, she might be an influence for the substitution of something better for the present code of living. She was introduced, by their common friend, Franz Liszt, to the poet-priest, Lamennais, in 1834. Christianity, to Lamennais, was a faith "without superstition and doctrines of Romish infallibility"[1.] - it was, in short, a religion for humanity. This was the ideal of George Sand, and she became enthusiastic over a religion which, to her, was synonymous with social reform. She soon met the famous lawyer and fiery radical - Michel de Bourges. It is the influence of this man, and of the philosopher, Pierre Leroux, which is manifested in the novels, "Compagnon de Tour de France," "'Le Pêche' de M. Antoine," and "Le Meunier d' Angebault." These are tedious in that she attributes to her heroes and heroines merely the long preoccupations of her own brain. Her novel "Horace" was rejected in 1840, by her old publishers, the Revue des Deux Mondes staff, because it was considered subversive to law and order. M. Émile Faguet sees her social ideas prominent in all her works, and seems to think her main purpose is always to set forth some ethical dogma. "In everything,[2.] he says, she sees or dreams of a social reorganization based on justice, and more on goodness than on justice." Like M. Doumic, he assumes that

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1. Thomas, Bertha, "George Sand."
2. Faguet, Émile, "XIX Siècle Etudes Litteraires": p. 388.

her theories come from some indefinite altruistic instinct within her.

"It is this goodness," he says, "this love of the weak which had inspired her confused, chimerical politics. She gave her whole heart to the ideas of the emancipation of women, of the proletariat and of the peasant, between the years 1835 and 1848. She sought, with good faith, the abolition of tyranny, of aristocracy and of riches."

Curiously enough she herself denies any didactic motive in her writing; she declares her object to be only selfish. Even in the revolutionary "Lelia," the novel in which she "puts herself into the skin"[1] of her heroine, she declares that she has no system, belongs to no school, and never thinks of the public when she writes.[2] Faguet quotes Mme. Sand as saying,"I am very much a <u>woman</u> in ignorance, the lack of sequence of ideas and of logical construction." Perhaps it is because she was a woman in politics, that she was so disheartend and withdrew from public life so precipitately when, in 1848, the radical government she had heralded so enthusiastically, proved, in reality, only a terrible farce. M. Zola regrets that so much emphasis has been placed on this phase of her work, and on her supposed Amazon - like characteristics. Balzac describes her as most mannish in appearance and personality; she should be considered and judged, therefore, as a man.[3] For Zola, she had always remained a woman, and in her feminine characteristics came her weakness and her genius. "She herself, "he said,"was mistaken when she dreamed

[1] Correspondence avec Flaubert: Letter XXXIII.
[2] Lelia: Notice.
[3] "Les Femmes Illustres": p. 168.

for an instant of the role of revolutionary moralist.[1]

The insurrection of June, 1848, filled her with horror, and she went home to Nohant, after the patriotic services to the Minister of the Interior of the Provisional government. Her disenchantment almost meant the overthrow of her political faith, but her belief in the natural and inevitable progress of humanity, did not waver. This experience - like her unhappy marriage - proved a stimulus to her art. She seemed to renew her faith in a simple idealism, and to set to work with a new mission.

"The artist, she said, 'who is only the reflection and the echo of a generation like his own, shows the imperious need of turning his look back, and of distracting his imagination, in carrying his thoughts back toward an ideal of calm, of innocence, and of dreams. His mission is to celebrate sweetness, confidence, friendship, and to recall thus to hardened and discouraged men, that pure manners, tender sentiments and a primitive equality are or can be, still, in this world. Direct allusions to present misfortunes, the appeal to passions - that is not at all the path of safety; it is better to sing a sweet song, to hear the sound of rustic flutes, than to reenforce the evil realities by the colors of fiction."[2]

She had been, at Nohant, on occasions, since 1835, when her divorce proceedings were begun. She staid in the village

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1. Zola, Emile, "Documents Litteraires": p. 210.
2. "George Sand et Ses Amis": Chapter XXIV.

of La Châtre, and in her tramps and excursions through the familiar country, she felt like a child, returning to its spiritual mother, Nature. In her letters to Mme. d' Angoult at this time, she manifests a curious mixture of romantic revelry in nature, Deistic philosophy, and certain radical political ideas which she was then entertaining.

"To throw yourself into the lap of mother nature," she exultingly writes in 1836, "to take her really for mother and sister; stoically and religiously to cut off from your life whatever is mere gratified vanity; obstinately to resist the proud and the wicked; to make yourself humble with the unfortunate, to weep with the misery of the poor; nor desire other consolation than putting down the rich; to acknowledge no other God than Him who ordains justice and equality upon men; to venerate what is good, to judge severally what is only strong, to live on very little, to give away nearly all, in order to reestablish primitive equality and bring back to life the Divine institution; that is the religion that I proclaim in a little corner of my own, and that I aspire to preach to my twelve apostles under the lime-tree in my garden."[1.]

After her divorce, in 1836, she took a short trip to Switzerland with her friend, the Countesse d' Agoult. Upon their return, the party went to Nohant, where, in the Spring, came also that celebrated group, which frequented Mme. d' Agoult's salon in Paris. The little company included Heine, Daniel Stern, the artist Eugene Delacroix, Hiller, Franz Litz and Frédèric Chopin. The

[1.] Letter to Mme. d' Agoult, July 10, 1836.

company amused themselves by staging little theatricals for the children about Nohant, with Chopin improvising at the piano. The marvellous musical miracles in "Les Maitres Sonneurs" are supposed only reminiscences of like episodes or spells woven by the magic of Liszt's or Chopin's playing. The influence of Chopin, of course, was even more personal, for he is supposed to have been madly in love with her. He accompanied George Sand and her son Maurice, in 1838, to the lonely island of Majorca, and was very ill there, so that Mme. Sand had to be nurse for her friend, as well as her son, through a long, damp winter. This incident, however, finds its importance in the development of Chopin's art, rather than George Sand's.

While yet very young, Aurore Dupin read Chateaubriand's "Rene," and while yet a child, became an avowed pupil of the Master of Romanticism Rousseau. Her first impression was profound, but served rather to make her hate man than to love nature. "I finally read Rene," she tells us, " and I was singularly affected by it. It seemed to me that Rene was I. Although I had no fright like his in my life, and was inspired by no passion that could motivate such power, I felt myself crushed by a distaste for life, which seemed to me to give growth to motifs in the nothingness of all human things."[1] She always loved nature, and, when but a child, under the tutelage of Deschartes, began a study of it. She loved to tramp in the woods with the peasant children, and later with her own boy and girl, and examine all the mean creatures of the

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1. Histoire de Ma Vie: Vol. III, p. 350.

field;"they stop at each flower, at each insect which chirps in the tall grass, and the insect, the plant, the mineral become, following the precept of Rousseau, the occasion of an object lesson of living natural history."[1] A true "daughter of Jean - Jacques," she always loved nature in a revelling, selfish sort of way - she loved nature for its own sake, but in communion with it, she always felt herself helped and inspired.

"If we were in Paris," she writes, "we would go from time to time, to listen to music, to refresh our souls. Since we are here in the field, let us listen to the music of nature."[2]

Nature not only soothed her feelings and ministered to her spirit, but it taught her, like Wordsworth, the practical moral lessons of life.

"Since I have delved into true nature," she writes Flaubert, late in life," I have found there, an order, a sequence, a placidity of evolution which are lacking in man, but which man may, up to a certain point, assimilate, when he is not too directly at the mercy of the troubles of his own life. When these troubles return, it is necessary indeed that he force himself to cast them away; but, if he has even once drunk of eternal truth, he no longer cries out for or against a transitory or relative truth."[3]

To her, she writes Flaubert, a life among the flowers, the rocks, the wide open fields, children - was a necessity. Her

[1] "Les Femmes Illustres": p. 173.
[2] "Questions d' Art et Littèrature": p. 284.
[3] Correspondence avec Flaubert: p. 89.

nature as passionately demanded it as the warrior's spirit demanded warfare. In another letter she tells him that she loves everything about her, no matter where she is; then she naively says that it is true she chooses her own places, and stays away from the Senate and "autres mauvais lieux." She never liked Parisian life, and she staid there simply to gain a livelihood. In view of the fact that "Cadis" did not succeed, there is a tone of sadness in the remarks, "I have left my dear world peaceful at Nohant. If Cadis succeeds, there will be a little dowry for Aurore; that is my whole ambition." If it does not succeed, I must commence again, that is all."[1]

As George Sand had lived most of her life among the class of honest, hard-working peasants, she entered enthusiastically into Rousseau's vague and idealized philosophy concerning them. Their simple life, as she knew it, was poetic and beautiful - a manifestation of the goodness of nature, for they were subject only to the rules of a primitive society. To her, their honest work seemed the secret of their happiness.

"The happiest of men, "she asserts," would be that one, who, possessing the knowledge of his labor and working with his hands, pursuing well-being and liberty by the exercise of his own intelligence, would have time to live by his heart and his soul, to understand his work and to love that of God."[2]

In an imaginary conversation with a friend, she says she often dreams and longs to throw off the yoke of civilization so that she may, like the simplest of men, enjoy life by

[1] Correspondence avec Flaubert: p. 137.
[2] "La Mare au Diable: p. 22.

feelings and instincts. "I would desire to be, "she exclaims," what actual society permits many men to be, from the cradle to the tomb, I would desire to be a peasant; the peasant who does not know how to read, that one to whom God has given good instincts, a peaceful society, a right conscience; and I imagine that, in this lack of useless faculties, in this ignorance of depraved tastes, I would be as happy as the primitive man pictured by Jean - Jacques."[1.]

These simple people know and love nature through feeling, they enjoy it and understand it without being able to describe it," or to use another paradox applied by George Sand, to children, "They think without understanding." There must be some bond between the primitive life and the "machine-life," she argues with her imaginary friend, so that those who can only know by understanding, may see the "candor, the grace, and the charm" of the primitive life. Sentiment alone can connect knowing and feeling, and, to George Sand, "sentiment is art."[2.] Art is the demonstration of which nature alone should be the proof; the artist's duty, then, is to connect the simple life with the more complex - to translate the unknown in terms of the known.

"Art is the work of transformation from the primitive to the civilized. Mozart sings in the tongue of men, the songs of the birds; Shakespere makes us feel the passions, the sentiments and the instincts as the most primitive and true man would feel them; this is art."[3.]

1. "François le Champi": p. 13.
2. "François le Champi": p. 8.
3. "François le Champi": p. 11.

The excellence and the virtue of "la vie primitive" lay in its closeness to nature, which, to a true Rousseauist, was the epitome of goodness. The Balzac Zola and Maupassant, this closeness to nature made him a rude, brutal, illiterate creature - repulsive to a refined reader, but George Sand shows us "the peasant of ideals and feelings, of dreams born out of his eternal dialogue with the forces of nature."[1.] She did not idealize him, I think because of any sociological meditation - she did not hear "the still, sad music of humanity," as Wordsworth did; she wrote about the peasant because she saw and admired the beauty and sincerety of his nature. It was not a matter of condescension, but rather an honest expression of her own ideal of purity. The use of the peasant, then, was not a mere literary device, for art for art's sake was to her loathesome. They were human beings, and, though far removed from the "vie factics," they were dominated by the same motives and had the same conflicting forces within them as other man. It was only because their lives were conductive to the development of simplicity and goodness, that George Sand chose to make them embody her search for truth. I hardly think it true, then, that her work is in a "kingdom of dreams," and that she represented the opposite of truth.

"Balzac and Sand," M. Zola says, "are the two types from which spring all the novelists of today. From their breasts flow two streams, the river of truth, and the river of dreams."[2.]

1. Lapaire et Roz, "La Bonne Dame de Nohant."
2. Zola, "Documents Littêraires": p. 195.

In the Notice of "La Mare au Diable" George Sand definitely announced her intention to write a series of pastoral romances - or, to use her term, "novels of rustic manners." At first she thought she would place them all under the title of "Veillèes du Chanvreur," but the last of the group, "Les Maîtres Sonneurs," is the only one which might properly fall under such a head. She denies that she is writing in a new tongue, or that she is trying to revive a lost one, and insists that she is doing nothing new "in tracing out the thought that leads civilized men to the charms of the primitive life." She decries the persistence of literary critics in pointing out definite designs and motives for her work - motives of which she, herself, was ignorant.

"I am always astonished," she says, "that the critic searches in them (her works) so long, when the simplist idea, the commonest circumstances, are the only inspirations which productions of art should have."[1]

She finds herself woefully lacking in the ability to give a true picture of the simple and beautiful which she felt. Her greatest literary service, then, she considered, was to give a stimulus to her readers, to look for the nature which she felt.

"If one should ask me," she explains in the Notice, "what I wanted to do, I should answer that I desired to do something very touching and simple, and that I have not at all succeeded. I have seen, I have felt, the beautiful and the simple, but to see and to paint are two different things; all that an artist can hope to

[1] "La Mare du Diable": Notice.

do, is to inspire those who have eyes, to look, too, See, then, simplicity, my readers; see the sky and the fields, and the trees, and especially the peasants in their truth and goodness; you will see them a little in my book, but you will see them much better in nature."[1]

Mme. Sand had now definitely transferred to a field more gently, yet more powerfully influential to the thought of her times than her former enthusiastic contributions to the political journals. It was unfortunate that Mme. Sand's antagonists in politics, under the erroneous impression that she could never write except when advancing some radical social doctrine, carried over their prejudice to these country tales. They supposed that the stories were purely Rousseauistic in exalting the virtue of ignorance as compared with the evil sophistication of society. As a somewhat whimsical apology, I believe, for her former misplaced energies in political work, she wrote, in 1853, to Mazzini: -

"I am and always have been an artist before anything else. I know that mere politicians look on artists with great contempt, but you, my friend, you well know that a real artist is as useful as the priest or the warrior, and that, when he respects what is true and good, he is in the right path, and the divine blessing will attend him. Art belongs to all countries and to all times, and its special good is to live on when all else seems to be dying."[2]

[1] "La Mare au Diable": Notice.
[2] Quoted in Miss Thomas' "George Sand."

Her literary salvation, as well as the very existence of the "Romans Champêtres," must be due to the fact that she realized her duty to art and its stability, when, in 1848, her social ideals, for which she had labored diligently, seemed tottering with her political doctrines. She came, then, to the "right path," the path toward her ideal of simplicity and truth, in the subject of the peasant, as she knew him.

She had no theories about the construction of these novels. She told Falubert that the wind played on her harp as it pleased, high or low; she was nothing but an instrument through which another sang." Her only dogmas were independence of thought and simplicity of maner. She had in mind not only "la vie factice" as a public but also the simple people of whom she wrote. " I have tried, "she told her friend Flaubert," to make myself understood by the simple, for they ought to read; they are simple who make success."[1] Her friend, in the Introduction to François le Champi, advises her: - "Begin; tell me the story of le Champi. Tell it to me as if you had at your right hand a Parisian speaking the modern tongue, and at your left, a peasant before whom you would not desire to use one phrase, one word which he could not understand. Thus you ought to speak clearly for the Parisian, naively for the peasant. The one would reproach you for a lack of color, the other for a lack of elegance."[2]

Previous to 1846, George Sand had occasionally used peasant characters as "accessories," with an increasing idea of

[1] Correspondence avec Falubert: p. 189.
[2] "François le Champi": p. 20.

their importance. In 1836, while at La Châtre pending court proceedings in her divorce suit, she wrote the novel, "Mauprat." Although the principle characters belong to the nobility of France, there are two uncouth, romantic figures which prefigure some of the rustic characters of a later period. Patience, the almost superhuman peasant wizard, is used rather as a force for the action and as a voice for the author's vague social theories, than as a human being, influenced by contact with other men. In her dedication to Gustave Papet she says, "I have drawn my materials in part from the cottages in our Noire Valley," and possibly from these simple folk she heard the romantic tale of a legendary wizard, whom she named, "Patience." She does not at all mean to consider him as a type of the peasant class, and she carefully makes Bernard explain, "He is the only peasant I have ever known to admire the sky; or at least, he is the only one I have ever seen who was conscious of his admiration."[1.]

Patience gives expression to George Sand's Rousseauistic doctrines. He cries out with evident passion,

"Nowhere is there a school where they teach us our rights;'where they show us how to distinguish our true and decent wants from the shameful and fatal ones; where, in short, they tell us what we can and ought to think about, when we have borne the burden and heat of the day for the profit of others and are sitting in the evening at the door of our huts, gazing on the red stars as they come out on the horizon." [2.]

[1.] "Mauprat": p. 147.
[2.] "Mauprat": p. 130.

The old philosopher voices, continously, bitter invectives against the aristocrisy, and yet he seems, conservatively, to cling to a realization that their nobility has become a thing inherent, something which men of humbler origin can never attain.

"It is strange," he muses, "there must be something in blood. Take the vilest noble, and you will find that in certain things, he has more spirit than the bravest of us. Ah! It is simple enough! They are brought up like that while we - we, they tell us, are born to obey.'" [1]

In this earlier novel there seems always, to be a consciousness of class difference, and of the relation of a lower to a higher class. The philosophizing of Patience is very interesting, but it is not the justification for his appearance. He is brought into the story because of the power of his weird personality, which, in turn, helps to bridge over any gaps of improbability in the love story of Bernard and Edmée Mauprat; he is an impersonal influence, too, in the development of the savage character, Bernard. After the death sentence had been given Mauprat for the supposed murder of his sweet-heart Edmée, Patience appears, and through the power of his supreme personality, causes the sentence to be weighed, so that he might give his evidence, which, because of the obscurity of his mode of living and his failure to appear before, as a witness, he has found possible to obtain. Patience, too, was the means of first introducing to the boy Bernard's mind ideas of manhood, foreign to the thought of the diabolical uncles with whom

[1] "Mauprat": p. 48.

he lived. Bernard, with some peasant boys, was going through the woods by the old hermit's door one day, when he threw a stone and killed Patience's pet owl. The old man flogged him - a gentleman's son - for it, - but the boy's pride was wounded worse than his body, and he began to feel a stubborn respect for the goodness of the old wizard. Patience looked at him, with fine scorn, and said,

"'But a Mauprat, look you, is a thing that knows how to read and write, and is only the viler for it all!" And later, picking up the dead bird, he said sadly, "'A peasant's child would not have done this; this is sport for gentle blood.'"[1.]

The superstition of the peasants, as a people, in this its initial treatment, seems to be humorous, rather than naive, to the author. It seems even a mark of cowardice. Before the child-incident just narrated, Bernard had been trying to get his humble companions to accompany him through a lonely path that led by the hermit's door. They all wavered, and several refused to go.

"'Not I; said one of them, running wildly away. "'I've just seen the sorcerer at his door saying magic words, and I don't want to have a fever all the year.'"

A character more closely approaching the peasant type was the Mole-catcher, Marcasse. By his disappearance at an early stage of the story, he dropped out of the action, until his re-appearance at the time of the attempted murder of Edmée. From this time on until the end of the story, he is a faithful servant to Mauprat, who says that "he spent all of his time in expeditions in my behalf." Marcasse accomplished animal-like feats in climbing

1. "Mauprat": p. 40.

to the top of the tower and grappling with the savage Anthony Mauprat - the criminal and the man for whom Bernard had been imprisoned. This dog-like fidelity seems the mark of an under-man. It seemed to indicate that George Sand at this time noticeably subordinated her peasant to a higher social stratum. Marcasse seemed, however, to have a very simple moral code of his own, which, the author seems to indicate, arose from his simplicity rather than from any conflict of forces within him.

"And his solemn oaths convinced me." Bernard says, "for I knew that he would have tried in vain to lie, his simple soul would have risen in revolt against his charitable intentions."[1]

George Sand, I believe, in 1836, although she herself knew and loved the peasant, felt that her introduction of these characters in her novel would be considered as social revolution. She, therefore, carefully placed him as a servant to the conservative characters, and treated him only in relation to the upper classes. As an apology for letting Marcasse and Patience enter so intimately in the wedding-party in Switzerland - and incidentally as an apology for giving them any claim to the thoughts and affections of her hero and heroine, Mme. Sand cautiously explains, "There are circumstances that obliterate all distinctions, real or imaginary, of rank and education."[2]

In 1844, appeared "Jeanne", the second novel of any importance in which George Sand uses peasant characters.

[1] "Mauprat" : p. 329.
[2] "Mauprat": p. 405.

"Jeanne" is a romanesque novel in which an ignorant peasant girl is the heroine, but is placed in a setting of quite conservative bourgeois. "Jeanne" is a prototype of "La Mare au Diable" and "La Petite Fadette," but the peasant-heorine does not live in the fields, but in a far-off, picturesque, desert land.

"I did not dare," wrote the author in the Notice, in 1852," to do then what I have dared later, to paint my type in its true place, and to surround it exclusively with rustic figures in harmony with the theme, so limited in literature, of its ideas and its sentiments."

She seemed dissatisfied with the composite character of the work, with the lack of that impression of unity so necessary to literature, and she ascribes it partly to a lack of literary courage, and partly to a lack of time, for she had to rush off the pages for money. She felt that she had made a "novel of contrasts" and that she had splashed indiscriminately in her brilliant oils, that she had "profaned the antique nude with modern draperies." She concludes her melancholy preface with the whimsical plea,

"May the reader be more indulgent with me than I am with myself!"[1]

She evidently had the purpose of idealizing the peasant, for she dedicated her story to one of her humble friends, a poor peasant woman of Berry, Françoise Meillant, in these words,

"You do not know how to read, my peaceful friend, but

[1] "Jeanne": Notice.

your daughter and mine have been to school. Some day, on a winter's evening, while you spin your flax, they will tell you this story which will become much more lovely in coming from their mouths."[1]

Jeanne is a lovely young peasant girl, the daughter of the nurse of the handsome young baron de Boussac, who lived in a distant village. He, with his friend, Lèon Marsillat, happened to be passing by Jeanne's home, on a hunting expedition, when they stop and find that her mother has just died. Upon the added misfortune of her home burning, that night, Gillaume insists on taking her back to his mother and sister at Boussac. Upon the advice of the curè of the near-by village, and because there is no alternative, Jeanne goes to the beautiful home of the baronne de Boussac. There she becomes a most charming, but humble servant of the family, and incidentally wins the love of Gillaume, Lèon, and Gillaume's fine English friend, Arthur Harley. The latter wants her for his wife, but she refuses him; Gillaume loves her passionately, but, because of the social traditions of his family, is afraid to marry her; Lèon proves the bastard, and takes her off to his castle, from which she is rescued, finally, by her two nobler lovers. As a result of the harrowing experience, however, Jeanne becomes very ill, and dies before her sorrowing "parrain" and his courageous friend.

Jeanne is so much an enthusiastic creature of George Sand's romantic thought, that she sometimes seems void of any striking human characteristics. She knew neither how to read nor to write, but the author seems to exult in this rather than

1. "Jeanne" : Dedicace.

to excuse it, she watched the flocks, and, in denying a knowledge of books, she said nonchalantly,

"I have been raised with the beasts. That is my work. It contented my mother." [1]

The peasant again, seems to be a means of bringing out George Sand's lightly veiled social ideas. Those simple creatures might well be astonished at having been assigned exhortations on subjects of political economy. "The peasant," the author confidently states, "always sees with an evil eye any attempt to enrich oneself, and, although he has no idea of public economy, he has that just idea of the social state, that none profits by the chances of fortune without it being to the detriment of those who do not profit."[2]

As in "Mauprat," there is here an evidence of sharp class distinction. Gillaume soliloquizes again and again on his inability to marry his love, because of the wide difference in their social standing; Arthur Harley is considered very unconventional and revolutionary to social organization because he seeks a wife in a class below himself. Jeanne could not ride to Boussac on the same horse with Gillaume, but the humble Cadet was dispatched there for that purpose of being her escort.

"The curè was right," the author sarcastically remarks. "A peasant on a horse with a peasant would never make anyone talk.

1. "Jeanne" : p. 77.
2. "Jeanne" : p. 60.

With a bourgeois, it would have been quite different."[1]

But Jeanne, like Patience, was not intended to be a type. She was a romantic personality and not to be compared with the gross, repulsive La Grosse, her aunt, or even the passively good Cadet. Like the author, Gillaume had entertained exaggerated ideas about the purity of the simple life, and, upon talking to some of these bald and uncouth creatures, he was disappointed in them.

"He had loved the country, and the peasants from a distance, in his memory. He had pictured them grave, simple, austere as the Natchez of Chateaubriand. Nearer, he found them rude, uncouth, and cynical. He drew away, disgusted already with the desire he had had to chat with them."

Their superstition, in "Jeanne," does not seem, as in "Maupat," to be considered a mark of cowardice or even as conducive to fear, but still as an unfortunate weakness of their natures. Jeanne did not get a doctor for her sick mother because her mother had taken the fever under a certain ill omen, and was thus fated to die. The priest, in response to Gillaume's query as to whether or not his parishioners were believers, said,

"Too believing in a sense, because they believe every thing, the truth as well as the false, idolatry as well as religion, druidism as well as polytheism. The good and the bad spirits mingle

1. "Jeanne" : p. 120.

their attributions around their existence."[1]

A suggestion of the naiveté and picturesqueness of this superstition, as a definite part of their simple charm, is introduced upon the episode of the sad disillusionment of Jeanne concerning some money given her when a child. Léon, Gillaume, and l' Anglais suddenly recognized in her the sleeping child in whose hand they had quietly placed some silver years before. She thought the fates had given it to her and she had always kept it sacredly a secret, as an omen of good fortune. Her charmingly illogical answer to their inquiries about the coins, foreshadows the way in which George Sand dealt with peasant life in after-years,

"You wiser people have your ideas and we have ours. We are simple - I prefer it so - but we see in the fields day and night, things which you do not see and which you will never understand. Leave us as we are. When you change us, that brings us misfortune."[2]

Henceforth, in her pastorals, George Sand seemed happily content to "leave them as they were." She no longer spoke of and bewailed the unjust differences in the strata of society. She also seemed to see, hereafter, what is intimated in this speech, a futility in attempting to elevate one or to lower the other to terms of social equality. She loved them, as ever, but her love now turned back to the simplicity and sincerity of her childhood affection. Al-

[1] "Jeanne" ; p. 65.
[2] "Jeanne" : p. 220.

though she felt that the bourgeois owed a debt to his humble brother, she no longer, evidently, felt it her duty to preach social equality.

"The peasant," she wrote Flaubert, "is the class most isolated from progress, and consequently, the least civilized. Thinkers ought to be thankful not to be in that class, but if we are bourgeois, if we have come from the earth and owe thanks to it, can we not fill ourselves with love and respect for the sons of those oppressed by our fathers?"[1.]

Two years after writing "Jeanne," the novelist boldly announced a series of pastoral romances, dealing with peasant people, alone. The first of this series was what is generally conceded to be her masterpiece. "La Mare au Diable." There is not a bourgeois in the book, and the rustic is shown independent of any other class, and dominated by the same motives, as other men. She treats him, then as she would other men, for "the dream of country life has been, at all times, the ideal of the village and even of the court."[2.] She now considered his aspirations as having intrinsic worth. Whereas before, she had considered any marked enthusiasm or ability on their part as evidence of "intellects grown sterile for want of development, earnest minds extinguished for want of fuel,"[3.] she now saw the opportunity of self-development within their own sphere. She now felt that there was nobility even in peasantry.

"I see on their noble brows the scutcheon of a Seigneur,

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1. Correspondence avec Flaubert: p. 268.
2. "La Mare au Diable": Notice.
3. Recollections of George Sand: "Pierre Bonnin."

because they are born kings of the land, more so than those who possess it for having paid for it. They feel their simple nobility."[1]

The idea of writing the story was inspired by a picture of Holbein's. It represented a poor, haggard laborer driving his cart in the field, and being led on by the triumphant figure of the spectre, Death. Below was the quatrain in old French,

> "A la sueur de ton visaige
> Tu gagnerais ta pauvre vie;
> Apres long travail et usaige,
> Voicy la mort qui te convie."

This conception of Renascence Christianity, which saw its only salvation by wiping out crime and misfortune at death, was wholly contrary to George Sand's optimistic spirit. She thought the emphasis should be placed on life, rather than death, and in her picture she would place at the worker's side, the figure of a happy, bouyant child.

"It is necessary that the laborer, in sowing his grain, know that he is toiling at a work of life, and not that he should rejoice that Death marches at his side."[2]

The story is the simple illustration of a very homely principle - that one often goes far to seek the good fortune that lies at his door. Germain, a widowed laborer, upon the advice of his father-in-law Maurice, seeks a wife who may care for his children. At the suggestion of his "beau-père; he determines to go a quasi-distant village, to woo a rich widow, Catherine Leonard. He

1. "La Mare au Diable": Notice.
2. "La Mare au Diable ": L'Auteur au Lecteur.

takes with him a poor little neighbor-girl, Marie Guillette, who is going to a certain farm along the way, to be hired out for service. She suggests that they take the lonesome little Petit-Pierre, Germain's son, with them, offering to care for him at the farm-house until his father might pick him up on his return trip. On the way, the party is overtaken by a storm, and they find it necessary to remain in the forest all night. Her care for Pierre, her courage and her forgetfulness of self, win for her Germain's affection and admiration, but he leaves her at the farm-house and goes on to the village. There he finds the rich widow "La Leonne du Village" and the simple farmer becomes disgusted with her vulgar, condescending manner. He escapes from the artificial society of La Lèonard, and longs for the simple Marie; in calling for her, however, at the house where he left her the day before, he learns that she has gone, noone knows where. He traces her and his little Pierre to the woods, and finds them, dangerously near "La Mare au Diable," the treacherous Devil's Pool. Marie had run away rather than submit, and cause the helpless child to submit, to cruelties at the hands of her master. The child, like the child in Tennyson's "Princess," is an unconscious bond between Germain and Marie, and subtly guides the action, by requesting his already wavering father to make Marie his mother, as he will never love any other.

Here we find a peasant society well organized, and a law unto itself. Rather than distinctions between the bourgeois and the peasant, there are here distinctions of degree among the

peasantry. Germain's family objected to his marriage with Marie, because they felt she was beneath him. But Germain shows a man's independence in the affair - a characteristic of which, I believe, the ordinary peasants of "Mauprat" and "Jeanne" would have been incapable.

There is no Caliban - like cowardice about the nature of these stalwart country people. Their contact with God's great out-of doors seems to have taught them courage, and self-reliance, rather thanfear. Marie has the peasant characteristics of superstition and fatalism, and yet these are not so dominant in her personality that she is passive to external experience. She rather,feels herself the maker of her destiny, and, with her little charge, rushes out into the night - peopled with what gruesome creatures the peasant imagination only knew - rather than risk her honor or the well-being of little Pierre. Germain knows the passions of the bravest of men as he goes madly to seek his lost loved ones. There is a certain note of virility - even of sternness - about this romance, notwithstanding its general tone of delicacy and picturesqueness.

In February, 1848, "François le Champi" began to appear serially in the "Journal des Dèbats." The motif of this tale is even simpler than that of "La Mare au Diable," and it is particularly attractive, because it is told by a peasant himself, in simple peasant language. Somewhat like the stories of Mme. Sand's

earlier period, this is the tale of two supremely good and noble characters placed in a setting of dross. There is an undertone of sadness throughout, which, unlike "La Mare au Diable," would seem to indicate a hopelessness in the peasant morale.

François is a foundling, who, when about six years old, was found out in the fields, by Madeleine Blanchet, the young wife of the tyrant Miller, Blanchet. Because of her tyrannical husband and her equally tyrannical mother-in-law, Madeleine does not dare to keep the boy at her home, and so she makes arrangements with a poor neighbor to keep him. As he grows to manhood, he is employed by the drunkard, Blanchet, to work in the mill. The miller, to draw the attention away from his own affair with a diabolical old scandal-monger, La Sevère, accuses his wife of undue familiarity with the youth, François, and finally, in a fit of rage, he discharges the boy from his service. As François departs for a distant land, Madeleine, who had been to him like a mother, bids him a sorrowful fare well, believing that she will never again see the one friend she has ever known. In the course of a few years, François has made his fortune - as peasant-fortunes go - and, hearing of the death of his old master, Blanchet, he returns to help Madeleine. He finds that the miller has squandered his money, so that his widow remains, a pauper. He therefore buys the old mill and, upon hearing the scandal that La Sevère has distributed over the country about him and Madeleine, he asks her hand in marriage.

There is an atmosphere of pessimism - even of fatalism - about the whole story. Madeleine cries out despairingly to le Champi. "My child, misfortune is on you and me, and the good God strikes us a hard blow."[1]

This pessimism is evident in François' lack of opportunity because of his obscure birth. In vain does Madeleine try to convince la Mère Blanchet that the child is not to blame for his birth, but the old woman, typical of orthodox society, shakes her head and places him in the category of the "good-for nothing."

Madeleine seemed to have made the best of her meager opportunities for study. She knew how to read, and had, as her library, two books, the Bible and the Lives of the Saints. These she had digested so thoroughly that they were a part of her thinking. Once, when she was carrying the child, François, she became very tired and was strengthened by the remembrance of what she had read.

"She felt as though she would fall from weakness, when all of a sudden there came to her mind, a beautiful and marvellous story which she had read, in the evening, in her old book, "La Vie des Saints;" it was the story of St. Christophe carrying the child Jesus across the river, and finding him so heavy, that fear stopped him."[2]

The body of peasant people, however, that appears in "François le Champi" were crude and course. Whether this was to set off the fine and delicate qualities of François and Madeleine, or whether it was the temporary conviction of the author's mind,

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1. "François le Champi": p. 108.
2. "François le Champi" : p. 56.

would be difficult to distinguish. It is certain that the meunier Blanchet, his mother, and La Sevère', are not, in any sense, idealized. François was disgusted at the old gossip, when he overheard her telling Blanchet's young sister huge lies about himself and Madeleine.

"And this child Mariette" he said to himself, "who ought to have a spirit of innocence and truth, a child who does not yet know evil, yet who listens to these words of the devil which she believes as though she understood their contents.[1]

In May of the same year, 1848, "La Petite Fadette" began to appear in serial form. This book M. Buis points out, marks a distinct change in George Sand's social theories."[2] He notes that after this, her outlook is invariably hopeful and her ideas less anarchistic. It might have been considered a novel of psycho-analysis, for the treatment of the abnormal Sylvinet dominates the story, and it is, in a way, the primary interest.

Landry and Sylvinet Barbeau, the twins of La Cosse, grow up with an unusual love for one another. When it becomes necessary for one of them to go to work on a neighboring farm, and the lots cast have decided that Laudry shall go, Sylvinet, the weaker personality submits to a passion of grief and jealousy; he falls into a strange fever, and finally runs away. Landry goes to search for him, and learns from petite Fadette, a queer creature of the woods, his whereabouts; in return for this knowledge, however, the little

[1] "François le Champi": p. 210.
[2] Buis, "Thèories Sociales de George Sand."

"sorceress" demands that he give himself to her, to be dealt with as she chooses. Her exaction of him is very nâive; she requests that he dance with her at least three times at the church the next holiday. Landry is deeply chagrined for he has asked the lovely Madelon Caillaud to be his partner on that occasion. His shame is even more pronounced when the homely little "Cricket" meets him at the church door and demands from him the first dance. After the dance, however, Landry's anger is aroused by the peasant-boys rudely making fun of the poorly clad little daughter of the woods, and he gallantly takes her part. She sees him in the woods, later, and, while thanking him for his courage in defending her, she asks him why noone loves her. He feels sorry for her, and explains, reticently, that her dress is shabby, and that, by her odd ways and her connection with la mère Fadette, a fabled sorceress, she, the child, is assigned uncanny powers. This talk marks the beginning of Fadette's miraculous improvement, and of Landry's love. The two become fast friends, and Landry's father, hearing of their meetings, banishes his son from home. Fadette goes away, too, to a distant town, and only returns at the end of a year, at the death of her grandmother. The money the old Fadette has left her, she coyly takes to the père Barbeau, to be put in his custody. This confidence so appeases the pride of the old man that he sends for his son Landry, and begins to talk of the wedding. This throws Sylvinet into another violent fever, through which, he is nursed by the faithful Fadette. The result is that Sylvinet is cured of his jealousy of Landry, even

though he falls in love with Fanchon Fadette. After the wedding of Landry and Fadette, Sylvinet leaves to join Napoleon's army - a man.

In "Petite Fadette," practically all the peasants pictured are simple, true souls; their lives are sincere and beautiful. The home life of Les Barbeaux is happy and beautiful; the sorrow upon Landry's leaving the home seems heart-felt. The faithful friendship of Landry for his brother was constant even though it was reciprocated only spasmodically. Landry, however, must have felt somewhat ashamed of this affection, for when Sylvinet came to see him at the home of le père Caillaud, Landry tried desperately to restrain his enthusiasm.

"As soon as Landry saw him enter, his heart jumped for joy, and, if he had not been able to contain himself, he would have pushed over tables and chairs in order to embrace him more quickly. But he did not dare, because his masters looked at them curiously, amusing themselves in seeing in this friendship a new thing and a phenomenon of nature, as the schoolmaster said."[1.]

"Les Maîtres Sonneurs," it seems to me, is the most beautiful of all the pastorals, although it is sometimes not even considered a member of that group. It is a musical fantasy, but its characters are peasant people. The entire effect is that of a vague, far-away, but altogether entrancing song. But the situations are only those which might confront a simple people; even the

1. "La Petite Fadette": p. 26.

language is distinctly non-Parisienne.

The narrator, Tiennet, is the cousin of a very beautiful country girl, Brulette, who lived with her grandfather. In their home also lived a young widow and her son, Joseph, a queer, moody lad of Brulette's age but for whom it seemed to be impossible to learn. He and Tiennet early became suitors for the hand of Brulette, and Joseph, one day, shows his two friends a cornet and plays for them weirdly. At the strains of his instrument, a strange man in black appears, who seems to have been Joseph's teacher. Once Joseph mysteriously disappeared, and Tiennet traced him to a far-distant woods, where he was listening to an old man's strange music. Later he goes away and stays for months. At a country dance, a strange, handsome, young man appears, plays for a few dances, and then dances with Brulette. He tells her Joseph has sent, by him, for his cornet, and tells her the lad is living happily in the home of le Grand Bucheux. A year later the stranger, Huriel, returns and begs Brulette to return home with him, as the only means of saving Joseph, who has fallen desperately ill. She goes, with her friend Tiennet, who has been rejected as her lover. Huriel falls in love with her, but is true to his friend Joseph. One night he killed a man in her defence and then had to banish himself from the country. Upon her return home Brulette mysteriously takes a child, Charlot, to rear. The scandal which this irregularity causes, reaches Joseph's ears, and he is enraged. He tells Huriel, upon the latter's safe return to his own land, and Huriel rushes to woo

her, blindly believing in her purity. The child, Joseph finds, is his own mother's, whom Brulette has kept for her sake. After the wedding of Brulette and Hurtel, and of Tiennet and Hurtel's sister, Therence, Joseph wanders off - a melancholy figure, wedded to his true love, music.

The sequence of the action is very faulty, and the plot resolves itself into not much more than a series of romantic incidents, but the characters are powerfully drawn and the background of weird, uncanny music is played upon with the delicacy of a master. The untutored child, Brulette, tries in vain to describe the atmosphere created by Joseph's playing, but her attempt to explain herfeelings is only an exclamation.

"I did not seem to see the flute, though I heard it clearly; but you seemed to me to be back in that childhood age, when we lived together. I felt myself carried with you by a strong wind - carried up, now over the ripe fields, now over the running waters; and I saw the fields, the woods, the plains of flowers, and the skies of birds which fly in the clouds."[1.]

There are many interesting evidences of the optimism, love of nature, purity - of these rustic peoples portrayed, but they seem, here, the individualistic, and tend toward differentiation of characters, rather than toward the formation of a type. The superstitions of Brulette, her naive aversion to strangers, her inability to read, yet her desire to learn, when she found a need for that

1. "Les Maîtres Sonneurs": p. 55.

knowledge, her reaction toward the gossip about her and the child - all seem to go toward making up a character who "had tastes and ideas that are not of the land where she had flowered." What a mixture of bonhommie, primitive religion, fatalism, and kind-heartedness we find in the old wood-cutter.[1]

"Do you know," he says, "I love them, these old companions of my life (the trees), who have told me so many things in the rustle of their leaves and the crackle of their branches: I have never seen one fall- either an old oak, or a young sapling, without trembling with pity or fear, like an assassin of the works of God."[1]

And the most noble, most courageious character in the book, - the most manly, I think, of George Sand's peasant men, - Hurtel, rises above any inborn superstitions, and philosophizes, through an intimate knowledge of the ways of nature.

"The beasts cower in bad weather, the birds are silent, the foxes howl; my dog himself seeks refuge inthe horse's stall; but what distinguishes man from animals, is to keep the heart calm and light in the midst of the battles of the air and the caprice of the clouds. He alone, who knows how to preserve himself by his reason from fear and danger, has the power and the instinct for feeling what is beautiful in darkness."[2]

The rest of Mme. Sand's long and energetic life was spent in her correspondence, and in writing for the stage. As her greatest charm lies in the interdependence of her characters with things and forces about them, her dramatic productions are mediocre,

1. "Les Maîtres Sonneurs" : p. 297.
2. "Les Maîtres Sonneurs" : p. 124

when not unsuccessful. Her last years are exceedingly happy and hopeful. Throughout the war of 1870, she tried in vain to buoy up the spirits of her melancholy friend, Flaubert, who felt that the spirit of France was being crushed. She finally answered him, in September, 1871, in a vehement outburst of faith in her countrymen in their hour of trial, and thence to faith in mankind. This letter was published in "Le Tempo," October 3, 1871, under the title, "Reponse à un Ami." I quote this letter, in part, because it seems to be a vindication of the romantic idea of the brotherhood of man, and of George Sand's own treatment of her brother, the peasant, She begins,

"What! Do you wish that I cease to love? You desire that I say that I have been deceived all my life, that humanity is to be despised, hated, that it has always been so, and shall ever be? And you reproach my grief as feebleness, as the childish regret of a lost illusion. You affirm that the people have always been brutal, the priesthood hypocritical, the bourgeois dull, the soldier a brigand, and the peasant a fool? - You have never then been young? Ah! We differ indeed, for I have never ceased to be so, if to be young is to love always. No, No! One cannot isolate himself; he is bound by the ties of blood; he cannot scorn, he cannot despise his kind. Humanity is not a vain word. Our life is made of love and no more to love, is no more to live."

George Eliot's English Rustics.

Although George Eliot had at one time drunk deep of the sentimentalism of Rousseau and of the sounder Romanticism of George Sand, in her maturity of thought, she held widely differing views concerning life. Like George Sand, she definitely attacked the prevailing classic standards of the early nineteenth century, but she did not attack them from the sentimentalist's view-point. Although she called herself an "aesthetic teacher," she did not mirror life through the glaze of a "rose-pink sentimentalism." Her attitude was rather that of the materialist, to whom all life was subject to scientific laws, and all human endeavor blind before the Sphinx-like riddle. Under the influence of Mr. Lewes, and, indirectly, of M. Auguste Comte, she became a Posittivist, laboriously mapping out the consequences of men's deeds with mathematical precision. Her fatalism was an undeviating determinism. Thus she must have thought that a certain intellectual perception was a necessary prerequisite to right conduct, and that evil was the consequence of ignorance. How different from the views of the naturalistic George Sand, who thought goodness was the inherent quality of the unsophisticated. She seemed to have adopted, rather, Maggie Tulliver's complacent and passive submission to a fate over which she had no power. Maggie expresses her philosophic views to the sympathetic Philip:

"'Our life is determined for us - and it makes the mind very free when we give up wishing, and only think of bearing what is

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

laid upon us, and doing what is given us to do."[1]

George Eliot, or rather, Mary Ann Evans, was herself the prototype of Maggie Tulliver. She was the same passionate creature of her surroundings, with the same stormy demand for love and sympathy. She was born November 22, 1819, at South Farm, Arbury, in Warwickshire; its scenery was prosaic and commonplace, but it was Mary Ann's loved home for twenty-one years. In 1820, the family moved to Griff House, on Mr. Frances Newdigate's estate, near Nuneaton. Here, for five years, she was the constant companion and ardent admirer of her brother, Isaac; it was this first love experience that has been commerorated in the "Brother and Sister" sonnets and in "The Mill on the Floss." One of these records anticipates the author's reduction of all human action and cirsumstances to a formula. Isaac left Mary Ann in charge of his fishing-line, telling her to snatch it in if a barge should approach. She became lost in dreams and let a barge draw near unnoticed. Isaac was furiously angry, but, upon finding that her neglect had accidently caught a silver trout, he smothered her with kisses and praised her superfluously. She wondered about her brother's consistency, and formed a vague notion of a governing destiny:

> "'The little lass had luck,' the gardener said,
> And so I learned luck was with glory wed."

When five years old, she was sent, with her sister, to a school at Attleborough. Three years later she attended a large

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1. The Mill on the Floss: Book V, Chap. 1.

school at Nuneaton, and, four years later, an academy at Coventry, kept by the Misses Franklin, daughters of a Baptist minister. Her religious experience under this Calvinistic influence was violent and profound, in keeping with her passionate and emotional nature. It recalls certain flashes of George Sand's life in the English school in Paris; the French girl's fervor, however, was aroused by Catholic Mysticism while that of the English girl was stirred by the imaginary possibilities of a Protestant conversion. During her long vacation periods, her father became her second loved companion. He would take her on his rides with him, and thus she came to know the surrounding country and especially the villagers. She listened with keen interest to their gossip, and stored away in her mind seeds that were later to spring forth in tales like The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton, or Adam Bede. Robert Evans, Mary Ann's father, was a carpenter, the original of Adam Bede. His sincerity made a deep impression on his daughter; Mary H. Deakin quotes her thus concerning him:

"'His sterling honesty, perfect sincerity, and loyalty, his simple belief in good work, done thoroughly and with a man's heart in it as the best part of religion, his scorn of bad slovenly work and the workingman who took no pleasure in doing a thing well - these were the most noticeable of his good qualities.'"[1.]

"It must be remembered," says Mr. Charles Gardner,[2] that Robert Evans and all Mary Ann's kith and kin spoke with a broad

1. Deakin, Mary H., The Early Life of George Eliot.
2. Gardner, Charles, The Inner Life of George Eliot.

accent like Adam Bede." The second Mrs. Evans, her mother, had a rich personality. From her George Eliot received her faculty of humour, her love of orderliness and her practical mind; this common-sense mother was recreated in Mrs. Poyser. Upon the death of her mother, Mary Ann, came home to keep house for her father, and, in 1841, the two moved to Coventry. Here she met the Brays and their kinsfolk, the Hennells - personalities whose influence was epoch-making in her mental development. The Hennels were creedless Unitarians, while Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bray had cast aside all religious entanglements and were plain sceptics. It was perhaps due to the absorption of their ideas that she entered whole-heartedly into the movement for the development of free religious thought, and spent two years finishing a work begun by Miss Brabant, - the translation of Strauss' "Leben Jesu." This type of religious criticism was too negative and destructive for her, and by the time that the "Life of Jesus" was published, she had become "Strauss sick."

After her father's death, in 1849, she made a brief tour into Switzerland with the Brays. Upon her return to England, she devoted much of her time to reading the sentimentalists - Richardson, Rousseau,George Sand and Goethe. Her former rationalistic attitude toward religion was naturally merging, under these stimuli, into Pantheism. In 1851, she became assistant editor of the Westminster Review, and in this position she came to know most of the intellectual men of her time, especially the radical thinkers of the materialistic school of thought. She formed a life-long

friendship with the philosopher, Herbert Spencer, and through him she came to know the dashing George Henry Lewes. In 1854, she resigned her position on the staff of the Westminster Review and left England, with Lewes, for Weimar. They lived together, in Berlin, Weimar, London, and Richmond, for twenty-four years, or until his death. There was apparently a perfect Platonism in their relations; they felt that they discharged all moral obligations in their provision for Mrs. Lewes and her three sons. This period in George Eliot's life, however, seems a pitiful contradiction to her literary assumption of reverence for Law as a sacred institution; it would seem that she had caught sight of the vision but had fallen short of acheiving it. Be that as it may, critics agree that, without this union with Lewes, George Eliot would not have been known to the literary world.

In 1857, he sent in her manuscripts of the Scenes of Clerical Life to Blackwood's; they were written, he said, by an anonymous friend of his, and contemporary critics supposed this friend to be none other than a dissenting clergyman. Everyone in Chilvers-Coton and in Nuneaton knew the stories of Amos Barton and of Janet Dempster, and, although George Eliot did not know any of the characters of Mr. Gilfil's Love Story personally, she had heard a vague account of his tragic experience. Although the stories are quiet, unassuming, and not in the least startling, they won instant praise from Froude, Dickens and Mrs. Carlyle. The story of "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton" centers about the unjust gossip directed against the poor parson because his family has kind-

ly befriended the selfish and unprincipled Countess Czerlaski. There is one perfect character, Milly Barton, who stands as personified Virtue, on whom rests the verdict of an unmoral fate. She is, however, human, lavable, and somewhat awe-inspiring. The story is little more than a picture of village life, with a distinct moral setting forth the evil consequences of village gossip. Even though her first effort in the field of literature, it gives evidence of the best of George Eliot's humour and the most tearful of her pathos. It is unique in that, although George Eliot seems to hear, sympathetically, "the howl of the wolf approaching" the door of the Bartons, she does not make of them sentimental abstractions; the uninteresting vicar's "very faults were middling." The study, too, is not of a single character, or of any inner conflict, but rather of a whole community, and of the way in which each member of that community is inseparably bound to every other member. The unknowing and self-centered Countess had her unconscious effect on the life of the community to which she had wandered; this thrill of response to her presence went through the whole village and thence back to the vicar's family, and left its unknowing blight there. There is an evidence, here, of realism treated in a new way: not with the irony and brutal energy of Flaubert or Zola, and yet not with the humanistic satire of Fielding, Smollett or Thackeray. It is merely an expression of the author's theory of art, that its supremacy lies in truthfulness.

Mr. Gilfil's Love Story is more a creative work, but it deals much less with the lives of the common country people. It

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is an artful and interesting story of a young rector who loved Caterina, the Italian ward of Lord Cheveral. The girl, however, loves the dashing, handsome Captain Wybrow, and is broken-hearted when he becomes engaged to another. In her passion, she decides to kill him, but is hindered from murder only by finding him dead. After a long sickness, she repents and marries her faithful friend and lover, Maynard Gilfil. The consequence of her unfortunate experiences on her passionate nature, however, is her death soon after her marriage. It is an early elaboration of the theme of Maggie Stephen, and Philip in The Mill on the Floss, and is curiously analogous, in part, to the author's own experience, except that she countenanced her own actions while poor little Tina and the guiltless Maynard had to suffer when a moral low was broken. Janet's Repentance was the least successful of the three stories. The theme is that of a woman reclaimed from drink and selfishness by a faithful, evangelical clergyman, Mr. Tryan. The conversion is due, according to the author, to the influence of this man's personality, and it is ethical in that Janet is converted to a sense of duty to, and service for, her fellow-men. More than in the other two stories, the characterization is the predominating feature. The motive is in contrast to almost all others of George Eliot's, in that sin, here, is the outcome of the defeat of the good forces within man; external conditions and minor characters seem here but the inevitable accompaniment of the inner struggle. Man seems the master, if not of his own destiny, at least of his temporary happiness; the only formula necessary is a deeply inbred sense of the Golden Rule.

Miss Evans sprang into fame in 1859, with the publication of Adam Bede. It was a story of her own past experience, and grew out of a story told her long before by her Methodist aunt, Mrs. Samuel Evans. Her characters were all gathered together out of her intimate memory, except Hetty Sorrel, who is a living creation. George Eliot has developed the germ of the story told her until it has become an embodiment of her ethical theory. The moral is quite evident: Tragedy arises from the sure consequences of our ineradicable evil deeds! This law is stated later, in Romola:

"Our deeds are like our children that are born to us; they live and act apart from our own will. Nay children may be strangled, but deeds never: they have an indestructible life both in and out of our own consciousness."

George Eliot, then, is evidently different from other realists and materialists, in that she had a carefully worked out social philosophy. There is an ethical motivation behind everything that she wrote; somewhere under the humour or the pathos, we can always feel her stern call to duty! Adam Bede, the tall, big-souled epitome of George Eliot's idea of human goodness, is introduced to us, singing,

"'Awake, my soul , and with the sun
"'Thy daily stage of duty run;
"'Shake off dull sloth.........
"'Let all they converse be sincere,
"'Thy conscience as the noonday clear.'"[1]

Adam is not, like his brother Seth, a "religious man,"

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[1] Adam Bede, Chap. 1.

yet he works all night to finish his drunken father's job. The one thing that makes him angry is for men not to do what their fellows have a right to expect of them; this applies as well to the carpenters who quit on the first stroke of the hour, as to Arthur Donnithorn who fails in restrain in a crisis on which the whole course of the tragedy depends. That Arthur was a "gentleman" with truly noble ideals, made him all the more guilty in Adam's eyes; "noblesse oblige!" Adam loves Hetty, the unsophisticated milk-maid whom Arthur, the grandson and heir of Squire Donnithorn has clandestinely won. Arthur, after a fight with his old friend Adam, leaves home, and Adam, in course of time, becomes engaged to the lovely Hetty, She finds she cannot marry him, however, and goes in vain to seek Arthur. Arthur, however, has gone to Ireland, and Hetty, in mad despair, murders her child. The death sentence is waived at the plea of the belated Arthur, but her soul is crushed. Like Janet Dempster, she is brought to confession and repentance by contact with a perfect soul-Dinah, the unordained Methodist preacher, whom Adam in the end, marries. This book is the culmination of years of painstaking observations of country people. These people are not alike, nor are any of them glaring abstractions. None are wholly bad, and none wholly good except Dinah Morris. The practical, clever Mrs. Poyser is placed beside a good-humoured nonenity of a husband; the big, strong shoulders of Adam bear most of the burdens of his slow, weaker brother Seth, and of his unpoised mother 'Lizbeth; Dinah at least shares the shame and the agony of the imprisoned Hetty. Certainly George Eliot had no social theories of

the influence of heredity and environment, when she allowed this motley group to be the offspring of a like nurture and origin!

Adam's religion is noteworthy as it seems to be the expression of the author's as well. He saw God in all things that point toward good, and religion in the faithful performance of duty.

"'There's a sperrit o' God,'" he says., '" in all things and all times - week-day as well as Sunday - and i' the great works and inventions, and i' the figuring and the mechanics. And God helps us with our head-pieces and our hands as well as with our souls; and if a man does bits o' jobs out o' working hours - builds a oven for 's wife to save her from going to the bakehouse, or scrats at his bit o' garden and makes two potatoes grow instead of one, he's doing more good, and he's just as near God, as if he was running after some preacher and a-praying and a-groaning.'"[1]

This is essentially a manual religion, a religion for the man who works. It is measured entirely by what it produces, and in a sense might be called the religion of Pragmatism. Thus Seth becomes a bigger man after his sorrow in losing Dinah; his soul grows, in the darkness, from an individual calamity to a desire for the social good. His religion thereafter is for others, rather than for himself. Religion is, to George Eliot, the antidote for evil, or the unescapable result of bad deeds; it is the practice of good deeds. It is an external thing, not dwelling in the mystic soul of man. Man, himself, thus reduced to what he does, is no more

[1] Adam Bede, Chap. 1.

baffling to the scientific mind than a highly organized plant; he can be dissected and studied in his just relation to his surroundings. She did not recognize the "two laws, discrete, unreconciled,"[1.] in a calculating, unromantic way, she failed to realize that, "Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends,"[2.] for to her he was quite as solvable a mystery as plants and other creatures of the soil. She felt it her mission to seek out the meaning of life, and to work out a solution for the sake of her fellow-man.

In 1860 appeared the second great novel, The Mill on the Floss. It is a revelation of the author's own youth, and is, even more than Adam Bede, a sociological study of life. Maggie Tulliver is perhaps George Eliot's most sympathetically drawn character, as she is, in the main, the author herself; but, with all her weeping and fervor, Maggie is mechanically sketched. Her motives are analysed in so much as they produce certain results, and her worth as a human soul is estimated in relation to the effect of her actions on society. It is only what she does, that counts; Maggie's tempestuous mind could find no rest like Rabbi Ben Ezra's when he said,

> "'What I aspired to be, and was not, comforts me.'"[3.]

One of the determining forces of Maggie's conduct is her books. Their influence on her makes of The Mill on the Floss

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[1.] Emerson, Ode Inscribed to W. H. Channing.
[2.] Arnold, To an Independent Preacher.
[3.] Browning, Rabbi Ben Ezra.

an "Intellectual Novel" or one in which the plot is directed by books, movements or institutions.

The story gathers around Maggie and her loves for Tom and for her two lovers, Philip and Stephen. The childhood brother and sister scenes are purely autobiographical, but it is uncertain to what an extent the other affair had to do with the author's life. Maggie resisted her supreme temptation; George Eliot, under like conditions, disregarded moral laws and says she had no temptation. It would seem that she did not apply the same rule of deeds to herself that she applied to humanity in general. In view of her own life, the unswerving nemesis in which she steeps her work, would seem somewhat insincere. Sir Leslie Stephen[1] makes the sweeping statement that "the whole theme of the book is surely the contrast between the 'beautiful soul" and the commonplace surroundings," and sees in Maggie's death in the Floss the inevitable outcome of the given character and the circumstances in which she was placed. Maggie rightfully belongs to the sentimentalist school of Richardson, and yet is subjected to the Yoke of the dogma of the materialists.

There was to be one more story embodying the materials of her early remembrance. In February, 1861, Blackwood, although he thought the motif "rather sombre" accepted Silas Marner for publication. It is short, for a novel, but is the most perfect of all her works from the point of view of balance and art. Here the child Eppie occupies the position of preacher, to point out the ever-present moral. The theme is, again, duty. Silas' happiness came

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1. Stephen, Sir Leslie, George Eliot; in English. Men of Letter series.

because he gladly accepted the duty that lay nearest him. Godfrey Cass' renunciation, like Maggie's came too late; his belated return to duty did nothing more than ease his own burdened conscience.

Perhaps her most delightful peasant characters appear in this book. Their keen interest in the doings of their superiors is manifested in the conversations at the Raindrop. Mr. Macey had always feared that the marriage of Mr. Lammeter and Miss Osgood would not turn out right because "the words were said contrairy." He had disclosed this secret to the parson, and that worthy gentleman had set him temporarily at ease by saying,

"'It's neither the meaning nor the words - it's the regester that does it - that's the glue.'"

Dolly Winthrop's honest son retains a hazy, single-tax philosoph in his simple brain.

"'There's never a garden in all the parish but what there's endless waste in it for want o' somebody as could use everything up. It's what I think to myself sometimes, as there need nobody run short o' victuals if the land was made the most on, and there was never a morsel but what could find its way to a mouth. It sets one thinking o' that - gardening does.'"[1]

In its vivid pictures of illiterate rustic characters, Leslie Stephen would place Silas Marner only after Far from the Madding Crowd and others of Thomas Hardy's early works. He finds the nearest parallel to Silas Marner in George Sand's stories of rustic life, but would discountenance the assumption

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1. Silas Marner, Chap. XVl.

that George Eliot took any of her artistic ideas from her French predecessor.

"But though the affinity between the two great feminine novelists is sufficient to explain George Eliot's appreciation of her rival's sentiment and passion, it does not seem to have suggested any appropriation of artistic methods. One palpable deference is that while George Sand poured forth novels with amazing spontaneity and felicity, each of George Eliot's novels was the product of a kind of spiritual agony."[1]

After the publication of Silas Marner, her novels became more complex in their characters and scenes, and more deeply engrossed in psychology, as she leaves the rustic places and people she knew best how to delineate. In 1860, after the publication of The Mill on the Floss, the Leweses had spent three months in Italy, and while in Florence, George Eliot had written Blackwood that she had conceived a "great project." She did not carry it out, however, until in 1861, after the publication of Silas Marner, she returned to Florence. Her project was Romola, an historical novel of Florence in 1669. The tragedy lies in the degradation of Tito's character, and this is the consequence of his failure to do his duty to his father, Baldassare, a prisoner in Turkey. The story lacks the human interest of Adam Bede or The Mill on the Floss, in that it is removed from that order of things with which the author could fully sympathize. There is one character that seems out of her proper environment; the simple peasant girl Tessa, seems rather

[1] Stephen, Leslie, George Eliot: Chap. V11.

to belong to the English mid-lands in the nineteenth century than to Savonarola's time and city.

George Eliot wandered further from the path in which her true genius lay, when, in 1866, she wrote Felix Holt, the Radical. It is a study of political intrigue and of labor problems in England. The action takes place in some mythical midland county of England in 1832. The characters, however, are not rustics, but sophisticated persons, dominated by complicated intellectual motives.

In 1872 appeared Middlemarch, a story laid in a manufacturing town, and, in 1876, Daniel Deronda. This book is propaganda for the reestablishment of a Hebrew nation in Palestine. It was received with "much repugnance, or else indifference"[1] by reviewers, and most critics accept what Mr. Oscar Browning disclaims with bitter irony, that "Thought and learning have usurped the place of art.[2]

Lewes died on the 28th of November, 1878, and George Eliot's productivety had already ceased. She published one volume of essays called the Impressions of Theophrastus. Such, later. Its matter is ponderous and pedantic; there is no trace of the delicacy and sympathetic observations that had once created a Mrs. Poyser. George Eliot seemed in the throes of a bitter despair, a despair which she attempted to drown two years later, by marrying an old friend, Mr. John Walter Cross. They had a brief honeymoon tour in Europe, but the wife died December 22, 1880, seven months after her

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1. George Eliot's Journal, December 1, 1876.
2. Browning, Oscar, The Life of George Eliot; p. 143.

marriage.

George Eliot was fundamentally a teacher; she felt it to be her mission "to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind."[1] Her method is "to tell my simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they were; dreading nothing indeed, but falsity." Her characters are mediocre, and purposely so she tells of sorrows that walk" neither in rags, nor in velvet, but in very ordinary decent apparel." But she is conscious that she chooses her men and women from the majority:

"At least eighty out of a hundred of your adult male fellow-Britons returned in the last census are neither extraordinarily silly, nor extraordinarily wicked, nor extraordinarily wise: ... They are simply men of complexions more or less muddy, whose conversation is more or less bald and disjointed. Yet these commonplace people-many of them-bear a conscience, and have felt the sublime prompting to do the painful right."[2]

So her settings, like the town of Nilby, are "nothing but dreary prose." She writes of the peasant, as the most mediocre creatures of her knowledge - neither good nor bad; he is only the admirable victim of her theory.

Although at times, as in the case of Adam Bede, Dinah, or Aaron Winthrop, she seems to have been carried by her enthusiasm over into the realms of Romanticism, she sets herself definitely against any movement that would tend to idealize the peasant or

[1] Adam Bede. Chap. XVII.

[2] The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton, Chap. V.

glorify the simple life and advocate the return of civilazation to the excellencies of ignorance. She found this tendency in German literature, and, in an essay on the Natural History of German Life, she says, "The painter is still under the influence of idyllic literature, which has always expressed the imagination of the cultivated and town-bred, rather than the truth of rustic life. Idyllic ploughmen are jocund when they drive their team afield; idyllic villagers dance in the checkered shade, and refresh themselves, not immoderately, with spicy nut-brown ale. But noone who has seen much of actual ploughmen thinks them jocund; noone who is well acquainted with the English peasantry can pronounce them merry. The slow gaze, in which no sense of beauty beams, no humor twinkles, the slow utterance and the heavy, slouching walk, remind one of thatmelancholy animal the camel, than of the sturdy countrymen, with striped stockings, red waistcoat, and hat aside, who represents the traditional English peasant."[1]

She attempts in her novels to correct "the still lingering mistake that an unintelligible dialect is a guarantee for ingenuousness, and that slouching shoulders indicate an upright disposition." She expresses all her pent-up intellectual disgust at Rousseauism, when she avers, "To make men moral, something more is necessary than to turn them out to grass."

Yet, because of her abhorrence of the prevalent romantic deification of the countryman, she does not deem him unimportant to society and thus a subject unworthy of literary treat-

1. Essays: The Natural History of German Life.

ment. "To speak paradoxically," she says, "the existence of insignificant people, has very important consequences in the world. It can be shown to affect the price of bread and the rate of wages, to call forth many evil tempers from the selfish, and many heroisms from the sympathetic, and, in other ways, to play no small part in the tragedy of life."[1] It is this part in human tragedy played by the ignorant novice on the literary stage, that George Eliot studies with the keen interest of a clever stage manager. She knows their foibles and their weaknesses; but she seeks not to better their condition or to instruct the peasants, but rather, to draw picture lessons from them for the edification of an enlightened audience. Her sympathy for him seems, in comparison with the compassionate George Sand, but in the abstract; he is to her a delightful object of humour or a very picturesque vehicle for the expression of her homely ideas.

There is nothing distinctive in George Eliot's peasants; they are not a definite product of the soil from which they spring, as are Thomas Hardy's characters, but they would seem to fit in anywhere - On one occasion Miss Gibbs has made an assertion as to what she would do in Mrs. Barton's position,

"'Yes, it's fine talking; said Mrs. Patten, from her pillow; 'old maids' husbands are al'ys well-managed. If you was a wife you'd be as foolish as your betters, belike.'"[2]

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[1] Adam Bede, Chap. V.

[2] The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton: Chap,VI.

Such a remark is typical of any unsophisticated village society, while the ingenious remark of Priscilla Lammeter to the Misses Bond - "'I don't mind being ugly, do you?'" is quite as universal in its familiar appeal - In short, the peasant in George Eliot's novels, is not a localized creature; he does not heighten the local colour. With the single exception of Silas Marner, who is spiritually as Eppie was physically, bound to his loom, her rustics do not vary materially from country folk of any part of England or America.

George Eliot was keenly alive to the thought of her times, and took occasion, through the action and philosophy of her very simple characters, to bring forth her own complex ideas. One of the pet topics of the century was education, and our author had somewhat vigourous views on the subject. Like the queer old Bartle Massey's, and like his pupil Adam's, they tend toward the production of efficient results. Like her religion, she would have her education tested by the acid test. "Does it work?" It is the philosophy of Pragmatism, applied in a very practical way. It would lead inevitably to some sort of a plea for vocational education, and this is what George Eliot is striving for when, in Adam Bede and The Mill on the Floss, she preaches so constantly, the gospel of Work. Tom Tulliver was a poor man's son, left penniless, and with only a useless classical education on his hands. The business-like Mr. Deane thought that, in the event of another war, "'it would be well to put a tax on Latin, as a luxury much run upon by the upper

classes, and not telling at all on the ship-owning department.'" Tom saw the futility of trying to make use of the learning he had gained while in tutelage; he wanted "'a manly business, where I should have to look after things, and get credit for what I did.'" Tom was never good at Horace, but there is a possibility that a business course might have proved of true worth to him. His logic was clear but his perception was dull on some points, and his senses needed sharpening - However, "Tom was clear upon two points - that his Uncle Moss' note should be destroyed and that Luke's money must be paid, if in no other way, out of his own and Maggie's money now in the savings bank.

There were subjects, you perceive, on which Tom was much quicker than on the niceties of classical construction, or the relation of a mathematical demonstration."

George Eliot's religion, as mirrored through her peasants, is often tinged with a soul weary Fatalism. Dinah spurns Seth Bede somewhat heartlessly with the injunction,

"'It isn't for you and me to lay plans ; we've nothing to do but to obey and to trust, Farewell,'"[1]

Later, in mental agony, Adam comforts himself with the thought: "'I am not the only man that's got to do without much happiness i' this life. There's many a good bit o' work done with a sad heart. It's God's will, and that's enough for us.'"[2]

[1] Adam Bede: Chap. 111.
[2] Adam Bede: Chap. 1V.

The real worth of the peasant's religion, however, is in works rather than in dogma. Adam Bede and Dinah are measured, not by what they are, but by what they do. Adam's vision is that of a work well and sincerely done; he would heartily endorse the views of Chad Cranage, the blacksmith.

"'Folks mun ha' hoss-shoes praichin' or no praichin'; the devil canna lay hould o' me for that.'"[1]

Thus the unconventional peasant religion, at its best, seems to have resolved itself into a passion for doing one's duty. It is the glorification of authority, and humble submission to the needs of an organized society. Adam Bede is the epitome of this stern, wholesome, practical type of religious fervor. Duty is with him a mania; it is to him what honour was to the knight of chivalry. It is the highest of all relative values in life.

Subordinate to and as a part of her idea of duty, George Eliot held that characteristically Hardian theory that man should be faithful to the class and people from which he sprang, or at least to those people for whom he can accomplish the most. Eppie is made to glory in her material self-sacrifice, as she thanks Mr. and Mrs. Cass for their kind proposition:

"'Thank you, ma'am - thank you, sir. But I can't leave my father, nor own anybody nearer than him. And I don't want to be a lady-thank you all the same. I couldn't give up the folks I've been used to.'"[2]

[1] Adam Bede, Chap. 11.
[2] Silas Marner: Chap. XIX.

The somewhat too ideal Mr. Tryan refuses to "'die at Nice, instead of dying among one's friends, and one's work.'"[1] Dinah counsels Seth "'to wait patiently, and not lightly to leave your own country and kindred.'"[2] George Eliot would show us the wrong of going out of one's beaten path by giving us examples with dire consequences resulting. She would show us that to "look before and after, and sigh for what is not," is sacrilege, because it presumes to defy what the Infinite has ordained. The most striking instances she cites are the sad, even bitter, ones of Hetty Sorrell and Maggie Tulliver.

Mr. Charles Gardner quotes George Eliot as saying, toward the end of her life, "A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintances with all neighbours even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread hot by sentimental effort and reflection, but is a sweet habit of the blood.'"

This tender love of home, arising unconsciously from a sense of duty to that home, is one of the finest and most representative traits of George Eliot's peasants. With the Tullivers, it has become an abnormal passion - almost madness. Adam Bede felt

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1. Janet's Repentance: Chap. XXIV.
2. Adam Bede: Chap. III.

it, and had the old house enlarged, rather than leave it and his mother. It is the central passion around which the story of The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton weaves itself. But Eppie gives the simplest and purest expression of it. It was on her wedding day, when, after disdaining the birthright which Nancy Cass thought was a "too long withheld but unquestionable good," she was returning with Aaron and Silas to the weaver's humble cottage, that she cried, "'Oh, Father, what a pretty home ours is! I think nobody could be happier than we are.'"[1.]

We see only in such naive outbursts as this glimpses of a people concerning whom George Eliot somewhat inaccurately says,

"I am telling the history of a very simple people, who had never had any illuminating doubts as to personal integrity and honor,"[2.]

Such statements, however, seem to be reminiscenses of a youthful Romantic imagination, which she constantly endeavoured to stifle, "My imagination, "She wrote Miss Lewis in 1840, "is the enemy that must be cast down ere I can enjoy peace or exhibit uniformity of character."[3.] For there was a period in her life where she considered Richardson perfect, when Rousseau was her ideal. At one time she thanked Miss Sara Hennell for "putting her on reading Sir Charles Grandison." "I have had more pleasure from him," she said, "than from all the Swedish novels put together. The morality is perfect -

[1.] Silas Marner: Chap. XIX.
[2.] The Mill on the Floss: Book IV, Chap. II.
[3.] Cross, J. W.; Life of George Eliot.

there is nothing for the new lights to correct."[1] Her mature judgment, however, lined her up with a different school of philosophy. She gives evidence of her complete emergence from Romanticism in her essay, "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness."

"This judgment "(that the religious and moral spirit of Edward Young's poetry is low and false)" is entirely opposed to our youthful predilections and enthusiasm. The sweet garden breath of early enjoyment lingers about many a page of the 'Night Thoughts,' and even of the 'Last Day,' giving an extrinsic charm to passages of stilted rhetoric and false sentiment; but the sober and repeated reading of maturer years has convinced us that it would hardly be possible to find a more typical instance than Young's poetry, of the mistake which substitutes interested obedience for sympathetic emotion, and baptizes egoism with religion."[2]

She even denounces George Sand's ethics as unsound and essentially untrue.

"The teaching you quote as George Sand's," she wrote Mrs. Ponsonby in 1874," would I think, deserve to be called nonsensical if it did not deserve to be called wicked. What sort of 'culture of the intellect' is that which, instead of widening the mind to a fuller and fuller response to all the elements of our existence, isolated it in a moral stupidity?"[3]

However, because George Eliot discarded all Romantic tendencies which might lead toward a deification of man, she did not

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[1] Letter of Oct. 13, 1847, published in Cross' Life.
[2] Essays, Worldliness and Other-Worldliness.
[3] Cross, Life of George Eliot: Vol. 111, p. 178.

fail to recognize a duty she owed to her fellow-men. She loved them as individuals while the Romanticist would love them in the abstract. A man's duty, then, must be social; his worth as a man and as a workman, must be measured by what he does for the people near him. In an impetuous letter of appreciation to Mr. Edward Burne-Jones, she defined what she termed the purpose of art;

"It would be narrowness to suppose that an artist can only care for the impressions of those who know the methods of his art as well as feel its effects. Art works for all whom it can touch. And I want in gratitude to tell you that your work makes life larger and more beautiful to me."[1.]

She measured her own artistic mission by just such lofty standards; she wrote to R. H. Hutton in 1863, "But with regard to that and to my whole book, my predominent feeling is - not that I have achieved anything, but that great, great facts have struggled to find a voice through me, and have only been able to speak brokenly."[2.]

It is through this service, or instruction, that she comes in contact with those common men with whom she has a "deep, human sympathy." Art, to her, is not only a true mirror of life as she sees it, but also a means of knowing men." Art is the nearest to life," she says; "it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot."[3.] She allies herself with her characters; while she

[1.] Ibid, : Vol. 111, p. 144.
[2.] Ibid,: Vol. 11, p. 262.
[3.] Essays; The Natural History of German Life: p. 161.

is working, the artist herself seems a part of the subject for her art. Like a true social worker, she tried to place herself on the level of the characters with whom she deals.

"Thus, if I laugh at you, O fellow-men! if I trace with curious interest your labyrinthine, self-delusions, note the inconsistencies in your zealous adhesions, and smile at your helpless endeavors in a rashly chosen part, it is not that I feel myself aloof from you; the more intimately I seem to discern your weaknesses, the stronger to me is the proof that I share them. How otherwise could I get the discernment?..........No man can know his brother simply as a spectator. Dear blunderers, I am one of you."[1.]

To me the characteristic part of this quotation, however, is not her magnanimous descent to the common-place plane of her subjects, but her "curious interest" in their doings, and in the effects of their actions on their immediate surroundings. George Eliot still seems a research worker in the field of society rather than a lover of mankind. She writes of the lowly man because she has discovered that "the existence of insignificant people has very important consequences in the world."[2.]

To her, as to Wordsworth, the main object of art is truth, but not that truth which is its own testimony," not individual and local, but general and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion."[3.] George Eliot does not appeal to men's passions, because she does not

1. Essays; Impressions of Theophrastus Such: p. 254.
2. Adam Bede, Chap. V.
3. Wordsworth, Preface to the Lyrical Ballads.

consider them, as does Wordsworth, the highest and noblest part of men's being;' she strives rather to instruct, to arouse the intellectualized emotions. For the passions are at best, individual and ingrowing, while those instincts that have been disciplined and balanced by the mind, are social. George Eliot was so predominantly a socialogist, that she calmly accepted the non-individualistic theory of Darwin, "Society," she writes," is a wide nursery of plants, where the hundreds decompose to nourish the future ten, as giving collateral benefits to their contemporaties destined for a fairer garden. An awful thought![1] "So, to her, the two great prevailing faults of literary art were insincerity and a lack of true moral emotion.'

Her characters are drawn from that independent, unsophisticated class which Wordsworth loved to portray, and her purpose, to a very limited extent, is like that which Wordsworth avowed in his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads: -

"The principal object, then, proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect."

George Eliot would deny the justice of the "unusual" which has been made attractive by the imagination; to her "things may be lovable that are not altogether handsome."[2] "There are few

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1. Letter to Miss Lewis, Oct. 27, 1840; Cross' Life ; p. 56.
2. Adam Bede, Chap. XVII.

prophets in the world," she says, "few sublimely beautiful women; few heores. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities; I want a great deal of those feelings for my every-day fellow-men."[1.] The practical Mrs. Poyser would deny any idealization of that rustic life of which she was a part.

"'Ay, ay! said Mrs. Poyser, reaching a small white basin that stood on the shelf, and dipping it into the whey-tub,' the smell o' bread's sweet t' everybody, but the baker. The Misses Irwines allays say, "Oh, Mrs. Poyser, I envy you your dairy, and I envy you your chickens; and what a beautiful thing a farmhouse is, to be sure! "An, I say,"Yes; a farmhouse is a fine thing for them as look on, an' don't know the liftin', an' the stannin," an' the worritin" o' th' inside, as belongs to 't."'"[2.]

Even truth in their portrayal, however, is sacrificed to consistency with the author's theory. She must always subordinate her sympathy for the actors in her drama, to the undeviating laws of life, which she has worked out with precision. She writes Blackwood in 1860,

"You remember Lord John Russell was once laughted at for saying that he felt confident hewas right, because all parties found fault with him, I really find myself taking nearly the same view of my position, with the Freethinker angry at me on one side and the writer in the Quarterly on the other-not because my representations are untruthful, but because they are impartial-because

1. Adam Bede, Chap. XV11.
2. Ibid,: Chap. XX.

I don't load my dice so as to make their side win."[1]

Mankind was to her interesting, and primarily an object of study; he was a member of that most complex of all organisms, society. Upon receiving Charles Bray's book, "The Philosophy of Necessity," she writes him enthusiastically,

"In the fundamental doctrine of your book-that mind presents itself under the same conditions of invariableness of antecedent and consequent as other phenomena (the only difference being that the true antecedent and consequent are proportionately difficult to discover as the phenomena are more complex) - I think you know that I agree. And everyone who knows what science means, must also agree with you that there can be no social science without an admission of that doctrine."[2]

Thus George Eliot remains, an apostle of determinism, and her peasants are subject to her general laws.

[1] Cross, Life of George Eliot: Vol 11, p. 277.
[2] Cross, Life of George Eliot: Volume I, p. 472.

Thomas Hardy's Wessex Folk.

"The material of Fiction being human nature and circumstances, the science thereof may be dignified by calling it the codified laws of things as they are."[1] Thus Thomas Hardy states the all-comprehensive function of his profession. His bold, unflinching temper penetrates to the heart of his subject; he demands a knowledge of "things as they are," while George Sand preferred to see things as she wished them to be. She was afflicted by the mal du siècle, and turned back to Rousseau for an aesthetic solution to the problem of life; he is faithful to the spirit of his country and of his own age. He seems to want no pleasurable answers to his soul-born queries, and truly representative of nineteenth-century thought, he seeks desperately after truth, at any cost, "By a sincere school of Fiction," he writes, "We may understand a Fiction that expresses truly the views of life prevalent in its time, by means of selected chain of action best suited for their exhibition."[2] His fatalistic pessimism is quite the opposite of Meredith's buoyant optimism and insistence on man's power to control his destiny; these men seem to experience opposing reactions to the same great spiritual crisis, and Meredith emerges, like George Sand, bright with hope and confidence, while Hardy remains the great, gray sceptic of nineteenth century fiction.

1. New Review, April, 1891; The Science of Fiction.
2. New Review, January, 1890; Candour in English Fiction.

Of his two working materials, human nature and circumstances, the latter are, of course, the more important factor. In "The Return of the Native," he seems to have reached that blank place in his philosophic outlook, which might correspond with Carlyle's Center of Indifference.

"To have lost that godlike conceit that we may do what we will, "he says," and not to have acquired a homely zest for doing what we can, shows a grandeur of temper which cannot be objected to in the abstract, and it denotes a mind that, though disapponted, forswears compromise."[1.]

Clym Yeobright was at this stage in his mental development when "He wished to raise the class at the expense of individuals rather than individuals at the expense of the class." But this does not mean that Hardy is unsympathetic with or unmindful of man. His characters are "not mere puppets jerked about by a malicious fate."[2.] He sees beyond the external, the knowledge of the characters he portrays;" a sight of the finer qualities of existence, an ear for the 'still, sad music of humanity,' are not acquired by the outer senses alone, close as their powers of photograph may be."[3.]

Although he does not recognize any power of the human will as a director of circumstance, he sincerely sympathizes with the struggle of the individual soul against the onslaught of an external force, or circumstance. Of his romance, Two on a Tower, he says,"This slightly built romance was the outcome of a wish to set

1. Return of the Native:
2. Abercrombie, Lascelles; Thomas Hardy.
3. New Review, April, 1891; The Science of Fiction.

the emotional history of two infinitesimal lives against the stupendous background of the stellar universe and to impart to readers the sentiment that of these contrasting magnitudes the smaller might be the greater to them as men." It is a certain understanding of this smaller magnitude" which gives to Hardy's works the quality which is not forgotten; it is his sympathy with man, whom he sees as the creature of Destiny, that makes Hardy a great novelist. He possesses the qualities which he himself ascribes to the born novelist; -

"Once in a crowd a listener heard a needy and illiterate woman saying of another poor and haggard woman who had lost her little son years before.'You can see the ghost of that child in her face even now.'

"That speaker was one who, though she could probably neither read nor write, had the true means to the Science of Fiction innate within her; a power of observation informed by a living heart. Had she been trained in the technicalities, she might have fashioned her view of mortality with good effect; a reflection which leads to a conjecture that, perhaps, true novelists like poets, are born, not made."[1.]

To the creatures of this man" of a living heart", we must come, through a survey of his life. He was born June 2, 1840, near Dorchester, and only an insignificant portion of his life has been spent away from that neighborhood. His home, this "Wessex," has been the picturesque background of his tales; his love for it is

[1.] New Review, April, 1891; The Science of Fiction.

too personal to be assigned to the general movement of nationalism ot to a theory of the necessity of local color. His general and unsystematic education enabled him to follow his own instincts to a very great extent. At seventeen, he was apprenticed to an ecclesiastical architect at Dorchester; thus he was early introduced to what he supposed would be his profession, architecture. He studied literature, however, at this time, especially the classics and theology. His keen knowledge of the currents and movements in the latter science are evidenced in Tess of the D'Urbervilles and in Jude the Obscure. After three years' apprenticeship at Dorchester, the young man went to London and attached himself to the Modern Gothic school of architects, working under the famous Sir Arthur Blomfield. His success was so great that, in 1863, he received the prize and medal of the Institute of British Architects and also Sir Walter Tite's prize for architectural design. His final choice between architecture and literature was probably not made until 1874, upon the immense success of his "Far from the Madding Crowd; he then moved back to Dorchester, where he still lives. While in London he had entered as a student of Modern Languages at King's College.

His first novel, Desperate Remedies, appeared in 1871. It is a vigorous story, but awkward in construction; the plot is an ingeniously handled one of "mystery, entanglement, surprise and moral obliquities."[1] In the preface the young novelist modestly admits that he is," feeling his way to a method." The

[1] Child, Harold: Thomas Hardy.

story is not attractive or agreeable; the action is determined by the secret breach of the moral code by a young woman, with whom the reader is not led to sympathize. Miss McDonell[1] sees in Desperate Remedies "the germ of almost every idea, talent, and tendency to be found in his later works," she finds, rather than the tragic despair with which most young novelists look on life, an austere and resolute facing of its ills. The scene is laid in Wessex, but the peasant characters and humourists seem rather to be conventional pictures than to be living units of a complex humanity.

The next year, 1872, saw Hardy's leap to fame with the publication of that "Rural Picture of the Dutch School," Under the Greenwood Tree. This delightful idyll shows the effect of years of patient training and observing in Wessex, and, in Miss McDonnell's opinion, Hardy has never surpassed it in beauty of workmanship and charm. Although its substance is more psychological than the title-page would indicate, there is none of that dark philosophy that pervades Hardy's later works; Under the Greenwood Tree rather is an embodiment of the spirit and the mood of youth. Dick Dewy, the young and very ordinary son of Tranter Dewy, falls in love with the young school teacher at Millstock, Miss Fancy Day. There are but two obstacles in the path of this love, Farmer Day's objection to his daughter's marrying beneath her, and the introduction of a rival lover, Parson Maybold. The first obstacle is removed by the council of the witch."Elizabeth Endorfield," who is endowed with the mesmerism of common sense, and the second by Fancy's own tardy conscience bidding her be true to the faithful Dick, whose sil-

1. McDonell, Annie; Thomas Hardy.

houette was not quite that of the conventional romantic hero;" it assumed the form of a low-crowned hat, an ordinary-shaped nose, an ordinary chin, ordinary neck and ordinary shoulders." The story ends happily, but the happiness of their living thereafter seems soemwhat questionable, as it is founded on a lie. The delicious charm of the book centers about the actions and the sayings of the humble peasant folk, and the honour about the manoeuvres of the chair and the bee-takers.

In 1873 appeared A Pair of Blue Eyes, Hardy's first tragedy. This is not preeminently a Wessex novel, as the scene is laid in a remote cornish parish and in London, but the life of the cottagers portrayed is essentially the same as in Wessex. This work is considered a minor one, but it seems to me very important, both for its powerful artistry and for its foreshadowing the ideals and ideas which culminated in Tess of the D'Urbervilles and in Jude Obscure. The two crucial scenes in the Luxellian vault remind one of the horrors of Poe, while William Worm's "sizzlings and a-fryings in his head" and the grave-diggers' genealogical discussion are truly Shakesperian in their effect of lessening the strain of tragedy. The characters all, even including the wavering Elfride, are fine and noble; the outcome is due, not to their action and interaction, but to an unaccountable circumstance, incompletely suggested by the influence of the dark shadow of Mrs. Jethrow. The tragedy is all the more poignant because it ends in bitter, almost cynical irony. Elfride Swancourt, the daughter of a rector, loves and is loved by

Stephen Smith, a young architect, and son of a stone-mason and cottager near-by, John Smith. Upon the vicar's descovering the young man's social status, the latter is banished from Elfride's presence. Stephen goes to India, but the two lovers secretly correspond, and plan their wedding upon his return to England. But meanwhile Henry Knight, Stephen's erst-while friend and patron, is thrown in contact with Elfride, whom he begins to love. In short, when Stephen returns from India he finds his sweetheard betrothed to his best friend. The happiness of the engaged pair is tempered only by Elfride's dread of Mrs. Jethrow, who alone possesses the secret of Elfride's life - that, at one time, she started to elope with Stephen, but returned to her home unmarried. When this information is received by Knight in a posthumous letter from the tragic woman, he leaves in despair. It is a case analogous to Angel Clare's; "had he had more animalism, he might have been a nobler man." Two years later, Knight and Stephen meet in London, clear up all misunderstandings about Elfride, and start to her home, each confident in the success of his mission, to make her his wife. They arrive, only to find they have travelled from London with the dead body of Elfride, who was, at her death, the wife of a third man, Lord Luxellian.

A truly great novel, and perhaps Hardy's most popular one, appeared in 1874. Far From the Madding Crowd combines a realistic candour with rustic charm and picturesqueness. Its characters are more knowable, likable, and far more interesting than any he had created before. The plot centers about Bethsheba

Everdene, a young "farmerette," and her three lovers, the steady patient Farmer Oak, the dashing Troy, and passionate Mr. Boldwood. Gabriel Oak's suit is rejected at the outset and he is content to be Bethsheba's shepherd, and to watch, as an outsider, her capriciousness and its ghastly consequences. She married the brilliant but hollow Sergeant Troy, who proves a scoundrel, and who leaves her a short time after their marriage. Troy is supposed drowned, and so, a year after his disappearance, she is about to allow an engagement between herself and Farmer Boldwood to be announced, when the hated Troy appears. Boldwood madly shoots him, and ends his days in a lunatic asylum. The long-suffering Gabriel finally receives his due recompense in the person of his love, Bethsheba. Although some of his oontemporaries, at this time, thought Hardy an idyllist, Far From the Madding Crowd shows plainly that its author is already harboring bitter thoughts and morbid ideas. Like Under the Greenwood Tree, it possesses the charm of rural, secluded England, and there is a pathos added to the humorous treatment of the rustics. The author now has a firm grasp on character and a certain power of description, not as well marked in earlier works. This novel, says Miss. McDonnell, contains the essence of Hardy's genius;" it is comedy, tragedy, idyll, rustic, chronicle and shepherd's calender." It proves undeniably" the range and room of English country life for purposes of fiction."

"The Hand of Ethelberta," which appeared in 1876, is a light, social satire of Wessex and London life. It is but slight in

conception, although Mr. Johnson[1] denies this prevalent criticism, and so balanced in form and incident as to seem somewhat artificial. It is, however, interesting as a representation of Hardy's early, somewhat violent revolt against class differences; with Joey Chickerel, he looks on the world as a "holler mockery." At this period of his thought, money and social position are to him, the Everlasting No, the reason why there is not, nor can ever be universal happiness. Ethelberta Chickerel, a peasant girl and the daughter of a somewhat clever butler, has received a meagre education and become a companion in a wealthy family. She seems to be unusually attractive, and she elopes with the son of her employer; the young husband unfortunately dies soon after the marriage, and Ethelberta is introduced into London society by her mother-in-law. She leads a dual existence, dutifully spending a small portion of her time with her humble family. Upon the death of her sponsor, Ethelberta is left with a house in town, but no income. She installs her family in the house as servants, and lets apartments to two wealthy French gentlemen. She loves a young music teacher, Christopher Julian, but cannot marry him for lack of funds. After many flirtations and partial engagements with noblemen, she succeeds in capturing an old wealthy reprobate, from whom she gains an annuity for her peasant family; she then magnanimously encourages the marriage of her lover, Christopher, with her little sister, Picatee. Ethelberta's success seems rather pathetic than truimphant; she says somewhat pitifully.

[1] Johnson, Lionel; The Art of Thomas Hardy.

"I suffer much sadness and almost misery sometimes, in reflecting that here are we, ten brothers and sisters, born of one father and mother, who might have mixed together and shared all in the same scenes, and been properly happy, if it were not for the strange accidents that have split us up into sections as you see, cutting me off from them without the compensation of joining me to any others."

The characters of the peasant Pickerels are much more carefully and sympathetically drawn than those of Ethelberta's fine friends. After reading The Hand of Ethelberta, one cannot but think, with Dan, about his sister's lofty attitude toward her family;

"'Yes, her life has been quare enough, I hope she enjoys it, but, for my part, I like plain sailing!"

The Return of the Native, 1878, is the first of Hardy's great tragedies, and, so far as form is concerned, the greatest. He has gathered together the "undertones of his previous works;" and now has attained sufficient philosophic confidence to set forth boldly his startling theories concerning human life. Mr. Cunliffe'[1] sees in this book the evidence of the influence of the sceptical current of modern scientific thought on Hardy, as a young man. The author of The Return of the Native, however, is mature in his thought and in his emotions. The book is a record of conflict between the old and the new; between man's futile struggles and the calm, ever-truimphant Egdon Heath. Mr. Duffin[2.] ascribes the tragedy

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1. Professor J. W. Cunliffe in his Introduction to the edition of The Return of the Native published in Scribner's Modern Student's Library.
2. Duffin, H. C,; Thomas Hardy.

to "greatness at war with dissimilar greatness," to "virtue looking on truth and failing to recognize it." Thus it becomes an absorbing study of Hardy's gloomy idea of destiny; the irony lies in the incongruity with which the characters are "placed" in the world. This novel, above all others, represents Hardy's ideal of art, that of Greek tragedy. The Return of the Native witnesses, as the old Greek drama witnessed, the overpowering of an inexplicable fate; the difference is that the Greeks complacently bowed before that mystic Goddess Fortuna, while Hardy vainly but vehemently protests against her. Hardy, specially in The Return of the Native, observes the classic unities, of conception and impression, and even of time and place. The peasants form the chorus, and their superstitions and homely wisdom help to relieve the severity and tension of the tragedy. The dark, ominous shadow of Egdon Heath hovers over the character and seems, as the poetic personficiation of fate and circumstance, to rule and direct the action and even the thoughts of its children. Eustacia Vye, that dark, magnificent Queen of Night, with "Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries," lives rebelliously on Egdon Heath, while her desires fly back to Budmouth or on and away to Paris. She is not immoral, but un-moral, living, like a child for self-gratification alone. She indulges first in the clandestine attentions of Damon Wildeve, a most fickle and despicable character whom Hardy sums up characteristically,

"To be yearning for the difficult, to be weary of that offered; to care for the remote, to dislike the near; it was Wildeve's nature always. This is the true mark of the man of sentiment. He

might have been called the Rousseau of Egdon."

Upon hearing of the visit of Clym Yeobright,a youth who has spent years in Paris, however, she sets her heart on a new ideal, and abandons Wildeve to his betrothed, Tomsin Yeobright. Clym falls desperately in love with Eustacia, and, against her mother's wishes, marries her, gives up his Parisian life, and settles down,temporarily, in Egdon. Because her husband does not take her to gay Paris, and because he, nearly blinded, becomes a common furze-cutter rather than to appeal to his proud mother for aid, Eustacia becomes repelled by him, and longs again, for the excitement of meetings with Wildeve. Pity for her husband does not cause her to hesitate from accomplishing her desire, and thus it happens that one morning he comes to her home; while the unfortunate Clym sleeps on the hearth before them, they talk of Eustacia's unhappiness. Soon they hear a knock and see Mrs. Yeobright, with whom Eustacia has quarreled and whom the latter has estranged from her son. Eustacia pushes Wildeve to the rear of the hut, and waits for Clym to answer his mother's knock. But Clym does not awaken, and his mother goes away broken-hearted; she stops to rest on the heath, is stung by an adder, and soon dies. Her son, maddened with grief, when he discovers that his wife has been what he considers, the direct cause of his mother's death, becomes one of Hardy's half noble men, "who cannot measure up to the great crises of their lives. Though still loving her, he parts from her. In his sorrow and loneliness, he repents, and writes her a letter, begging her to return to him, but, by a trick of fate, the letter never reaches her.

The night is black and stormy, and, as he hears some one coming to him out of the night, he rushes down, expecting to meet his love. Instead, it is his cousin Tomsin, who comes to tell him that her husband, Wildeve, is eloping with Eustacia, Clym with the story and ever-present reddelman, Diggory Venn, go in a mad search for the pair, and find them, dead, in one of Egdon's deadly whirl-pools. Hardy reminds the austerely artists that he would have ended his drama at this point, but "for certain circumstances of serial publication," he adds the happy marriage of Tomsin with the faithful Venn, and leaves Yeobright to roam the heath, preaching a new gospel, of whose substance we are left in doubt. The severity of this majestic plot is somewhat mitigated by a picturesque setting; the tragic element is in combination with the old idyllic one. The title of the book, I believe, is extremely significant, as it indicates a crisis in the author's conception of his literary mission. It refers primarily to Yeobright's abandonment of his Parisian life and learning, in order to come back and work among and for his own people. Thomas Hardy was as truly a son of Wessex as was Clym Yeobright of Egdon; four years before writing this book, he had left an unusually promising career in London to go back to his own Dorset, to remain there, employing his genius and energy among and for the people and the scenes that he knew so well. Clym's experience, so far as the title goes, I believe, was analagous to the author's own.

There follow in quick succession three minor novels, not dealing with Wessex, "The Trumpet Major," 1880, "A Laodicean,",

[illegible]

[illegible]

1881, and "Two on a Tower," 1882. These show a reversion to a major key and to a lighter tone, and with it, a falling off in power. The Trumpet Major is "the sunniest of Hardy's novels;"[1] it is full of harmless satire, and "Love is the inconsequent lord of all."[2] The Laodicean shows a greater depression in development; its characters are dull, even frigid. Even the heroine, Paula Power, is but a lukewarm individual, half romantic and half worldly. Two on a Tower is not in any sense rustic; it is an unpopular outcry against the injustice of conventions. 1886 saw the publication of "No mere record of misfortune; it is simply the most hopeless book ever written," The Mayor of Casterbridge. This is the tragic story of one man's titanic struggle with unseen and unknown forces; as Mr. Duffin says, "It is the study of a single mortal writhing on the toasting-fork of fate. "'It is the study of a hay-trusser's hopes, his momentary and hollow truimph, his disappointments and his desperate fall. The outlook is one of "strong despair." Michael Henchard, one of Hardy's giant spirits, in a moment of drunken madness, sells his wife and baby-girl to a sailor. His wife naively thinks the contract binding, and stoically lives with the sailor eighteen years, at the end of which time, she, supposing him to be dead, goes, with her daughter, Elizabeth-Jane, insearch of her kinsman," Mr. Henchard. She finds him the respected and powerful Mayor of Casterbridge, and, through her daughter, she appeals to him for aid. Henchard, anxious to make his wife amends as well as to win the love of his supposed

[1] Child, Harold; Thomas Hardy.
[2] McDonell, Annie; Thomas Hardy.

daughter, remarries Susan. About the same time he becomes insanely infatuated with a young Scotchman, Donald Farfrae, whom he makes manager of his corn-selling business. Through jealously of his own authority and Elizabeth-Jane's affections, Henchard kills his friendship for Farfrae, and discharges him. Upon the death of his wife, Henchard opens a letter not supposed to be opened until Elizabeth-Jane's wedding day - a letter which discloses the fact that Elizabeth-Jane is not his, but the sailor's daughter. The Mayor becomes so bitter that he encourages the girl to leave his home, and be a companion to some woman, whose name he is too indifferent to ask. The lady, however, proves to be Lucetta, recently come to Casterbridge from Jersey, where she had a questionable experience with Henchard, some years before; there they had become engaged and the mayor had only been awaiting the death of Susan to carry out this design. Farfrae, however, unconsciously out-woos him, and wins his prize away. Henchard begins to lose the public esteem, he becomes a bankrupt, and a poor hay-trusser again, working for his old protigè, Farfrae. Just as he sold his wife, now it seems that he is sold, to Frafrae. Farfrae is Mayor, and even lives in the ex-mayor's house, at this, the wretched, turbulent Henchard cries out, "My furniture too! Surely he'll buy my body and soul likewise!" His broken spirit is now stimulated only by the faithful Elizabeth-Jane, but she, too, is doomed to be lost to him. Upon the death of Lucetta, she, also, is won by Farfrae and her true father turns up just in time to forestall the mayor's last sad privilege of giving his daughter away. All the bitterness and heart-break that the

human heart can conceive, as well as the quiet, admirable courage of the man who says, "My punishment is not greater than I can bear!" are felt in Michael Henchard's simple will: -

"Michael Henchard's Will.

'That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death,
or made to grieve on account of me.
'& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground,
'& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell,
'& that nobody is wished to see my dead body,
'& that no murners walk behind me at the funeral,
'& that no flours be planted on my grave,
'& that no man remember me,
'to this I put my name
'Michael Henchard."

There is perhaps less bitterness evident in The Woodlanders, and hence the work is indicative of Hardy's real strength. It deals with humble woodland rustics, the only exceptions being the unlikable Dr. Fitzpiers, and the despicable Felice Charmond. Grace shows little change resulting from her social contact at finishing school, with the exception of a temporary desire for the flashiness of Mrs. Charmond, and a greater susceptibility, perhaps to the intellectual paltriness of Fitzpiers. It is really, a somewhat less ironic, and a more wholesome tragedy of one man, and, as in the case of The Mayor of Casterbridge, that man is, inherently, a rustic. The other characters in The Woodlanders, however, are not so dominated and eclipsed by the central figure as in The Mayor of

Casterbridge. Giles Winterborne, by reason of a vow made his father by Mr. Melbury, is the accepted fiancèe of Grace, who has, however, been away at school, and who has not seen her old lover since she "must have been in short frocks!" All goes well, until Grace hears of a mysterious, romantic, and learned young doctor, recently come to this district of the woodlands. Circumstance, in the shape of a frightened Grammer Oliver, who has, in a moment of rashness, bartered with the doctor concerning the sale of her brain after death, for a post-mortem examination, - this very material circumstance , it seems, sends Grace to the doctor's house one day, and the glamour of his mystic array of brain cells and other evidences of profound genius, precipitate a romance. As Giles has lost what little property he had, the lumber-merchant Melbury loses his scruples about a promise made long ago, and encourages the wedding of his daughter and Fitzpiers, the most promising man thereabouts. - The marriage, largely because of the vastly different settings from which the two principals have sprung, is not long happy. Fitzpiers enters into an affair with the dazzling Mme. Charmond, and Grace is left a neglected wife. She is led to believe she can obtain a divorce, and confesses her love for Giles, believing that she can marry him soon. A divorce is impossible, however, and, upon hearing that her husband is returning to her home, she sets forth for a friend's home, miles away. As the night is stormy, she is lost and finally passes the night in Giles' cottage, while he stays out in the storm. The exposure is too severe for him, and is the cause of his death. In death, however, as in life, Grace leaves him to return to a reformed Fitzpiers; only

Marty South, a poor peasant girl who always loved Giles, is left with him, always true. It seems, that, in the development of Hardy's philosophy, The Woodlanders logically beongs before The Return of the Native, and The Mayor of Casterbridge; it stands, however, after the latter and before Tess, as a temporary ray of hope in prevailing blackness.

Hardy's two volumes of short stories "Wessex Tales," and "A Group of Noble Dames," came out in 1888 and 1891 respectively. The first volume deals with stories of rustic life, of human souls in conflict with thatgreat mother, their environment. "Unity of effect," says Mr. Johnson,"[1] is, in my own judgment, the distinction of Mr. Hardy." This effect is certainly predominant in Hardy's short stories, as well as his longer works. They seem to me like Poe's, in their intensity of effect. As is the case with his tragedies, Hardy chose rather to be loyal to his artistic conscience than to write for his magazine audience; he adhered to a strict and powerful form which he used only through long study. The Wessex Tales, contain a greater proportion of nature material than the novels, but even the most pastoral of them contain some satire. Perhaps the most characteristic, and certainly the one most like Poe, is The Withered Arm; it is different from Poe in that the horror it creates in the reader is inevitably mingled with human pity. Rhoda Brook, a somewhat seclusive milk-maid, anticipates with apprehension the return to Egdon Heath of her employer and the father of her child, Farmer Lodge, with his bride, Gertrude, Rhoda dreams one night that Gertrude has visited her in the night, and

[1] Johnson, Lionel; The Art of Thomas Hardy.

that she, Rhoda, grasps the other's arm and throws her to the floor. Gertrude's arm actually becomes withered, assuming, in its hideousness, the marks of the print of a hand. The simple Gertrude asks a conjuror about her affliction and he tells her that Rhoda is a soceress, her mortal enemy, and the cause of her wound. Rhoda and her boy move away. Six years later, Gertrude, who has lost the love of her husband, with the loss of her beauty, goes again to the conjuror, asking for a cure. His frightful advice is to touch, with her arm, the neck of a murdered man. While her husband is away, she contrives with difficulty, to gain admittance to the scene of an execution for theft. As she applies her arm to the murdered man's neck, she hears a shriek, looks around and sees Rhoda and her husband,whose son she has just touched. The hatred in their faces, together with the horror of her situation, kills her.

In 1892 appeared Tess of the D'Urbervilles, "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented." This book was meant by Hardy to be a battle-ground; in it the author brings bold charges against the judgments of society. In its desperate efforts to be conventional it crushes what is finest and most sensitive in its members. Although dealing with a very different type of humanity the argument is much the same as in Browning's A Blot in the 'Scutcheon; Tess, like Mildred, was pure because she desired to be. Hardy's measure of man is in the heart's intention and longing; society measures man by his conduct and fails to recognize the external force of circumstance and environment which go toward the formulation of man's

actions. Angel Clare, one of the most admirable of Hardy's men, yet fails, because of his unconscious education in the forms of a society which he disliked but respected, to measure up to the requirements of a man. Hardy would show us that Alec D'Urberville, with all his baseness and animalism, is sincere, and true to himself; thus he is less dangerous to Tess and less despicable than Clare, who, like the Pharisees accusing Jesus, saw white and called it black. Thus Mr. Johnson calls it " a long tragedy upon the striving of that modern spirit, among the ancient Wessex places." Tess Durbeyfield, a poor peasant girl, is sent, through the poverty and ambition of her parents, to search for her supposed relatives, the wealthy D'Urbervilles. With them she secures employment as manager of their little chicken farm, and, in this position, Tess is thrown in unwilling proximity to the hated Alec. Four months after her arrival at Trantridge, she returns home, socially ruined. Upon the death of her baby Sorrow, she seeks employment in a dairy far away, in the vicinity of Kingsbue, where her "useless ancesters" lie buried. There she meets Angel Clare, a son of a clergyman, but who, instead of entering the University in preparation for the ministry, has come to this dairy as an apprentice. Inevitably Clare and the lovely Tess love one another, and after much hesitation on her part as well as on his, they become engaged. Tess tried sturdily to inform him of her crime, but the letter, in which she has written her story, an all-seeing Fate has prevented from reaching him, and the two are married. They go on their honeymoon to the house of Tess' illustrious ancestors, and, there, on the night of their

wedding day, Tess confesses her secret. Although Clare has admitted himself guilty of a like breach of the social code, his Calvinistic ancestry rises up in shame at her outrage, and, in the course of a week, he leaves her, and goes to Brazil. The broken-hearted Tess finds employment at a distant farm, where she is shadowed by a "reformed" Alec D'Urberville. In sheer despair and physical exhaustion, she goes with him, and Clare returns from Brazil too late. When he sees that her husband still loves her, she employs the only means her maddened senses can discern to be free; she stabs D'Urberville. For two weeks Angel and Tess continue, in secret, an interrupted honeymoon begun a year before. Of course the hangmen find them, out in that isolated pavilion of the night, Stonebenge; they take her away from this happiness snatched from a stingy Fate, away to the gallows, where she pays to the full. Tess is an unvarnished soul, and, I believe, the most lovable character Mr. Hardy has produced. Her purity is not obliterated by the grossness about her, but she, rather, has been enlarged and ennobled by the tragedy of her unjust place in life. Thus Tess of the D'Urbervilles, though intensely tragic, ends with the victim in noble peace. Like Giles Winterborne, Tess has been happy in death, for she has given her poor, tired life for the sake of the one she loves. There is none of Michael Henchard's moral disintegration in her, but rather, a quiet dignity.

In 1892, Hardy published the fantastic tale, The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved. The scene is laid on some distant isle and the hero is Jocelyn, a painter, who is always in search

for his ideal woman, the "Well-Beloved." The story in no way adds to the author's fame as a realist. More pleasing and artistic was his book of short stories. Life's Little Ironies, which appeared in 1894. Their most notable characteristic is local colour. The function of the short story is to "skim over the surface of life,"[1] and only in his short stories does Hardy do this. "For his plots, incidents and scenes," says Miss McDonnell," and for some of his characters, he has dug into the soil he knows best."

In 1895 appeared Hardy's last great work of fiction, that much-criticized novel, Jude the Obscure. It is this novel which unmistakably marks Hardy as the leader in the freer paths of English fiction. His fearlessness and earnestness in this, the culmination of that stock of ideas with which he began his literary career, have been considered as an insult to civilized society. The book was stopped, in serial form, because of the shocked demand of the magazine public. Hardy had already boldly stated the purpose which led him to conceive of Jude the Obscure.

"Hence, in perceiving that taste is arriving anew at the point of high tragedy, writers are conscious that its revived presentation demands enrichment by further truths - in other words, or<u>ig</u>inal treatment; treatment which seeks to show Nature's unconsciousness not of essential laws, but of those laws framed merely as social expedients by humanity, without a basis in the heart of things; treatment which expresses the truimph of the crowd over the hero, of the commonplace majority over the exceptional

1. McDonell, Annie; Thomas Hardy.

few."[1]

Thus, in a very different way, Hardy would ally himself with John Stuart Mill in crying out against the tyranny of the majority, and with Carlyle in regretting the suppression of the hero in man. Carlyle, however, thinks the mark of the hero is his conduct or the assertion of his genius, while Hardy finds the hero down in the human heart, unseen and unnoticed by society.

Hardy's tragedy, like Shakespeare's results from man breaking the laws laid down by men, but Shakespeare ascribes the wrong to the individual while Hardy ascribes it to the class who made the barriers to "natural spontaneity." The necessary ingredient of a tragedy, however, is evil, therefore, "the crash of broken commandments is as necessary an accompaniment to the catastrophe of a tragedy as the noise of drum and cymbals to a truimphal march."[2]

In Jude the Obscure, the crash comes from the conflict of a human soul with an objective governing power; subjectivity versus objectivity, and, the former must inevitably be defeated. It is a valiant struggle between love and morality, and the love, which Hardy would have us believe noble, because it is pos<u>it</u>ive, is hopeless before the power of a negative social tradition; Jude and Sue, are arbitrarily placed in the class of the "not respectable." As the "accepted school of morals," the church received the hardest blow in this general tirade on society. To be himself, Jude sees

[1] New Review, January, 1890; Candour in English Fiction.
[2] New Review, January, 1890.

that it would be "glaringly inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love is regarded as at its best a frailty and at its worst damnation." Jude Fawley seems always to be unwelcome to society. When a boy he lives with an old aunt who hates children; he fits nowhere. When a youth, he is trapped into a marriage with a very uncouth country girl, Arabella, and this marriage blights, all Jude's fond hopes of becoming a scholar. Arabella leaves him, however, and he goes to Christminster to obtain work, in the hope of sometime entering the university. There he meets his cousin, Sue Bridehead, and loves her, she, however, in order to appease the eye of scandal, marries a sedate old school-teacher, Mr. Phillotson. She finds life unendurable with him, and so, with his consent, she goes to live with Jude. A few years later, they return to Christminster, broken in heart and scorned by an austere public. Arabella's son, "Father Time," has joined their little family, and when he hangs Sue's two little children and himself, leaving the pitiful little note,"Done because we are too menny," Sue considers it a judgment of Providence on her, and so she returns to her husband, Mr. Phillotson. Jude, utterly dejected and hopeless, returns to the loathsome Arabella, and soon dies of consumption.

As a painter of nature, Hardy is preeminent among English prose writers. Her knows the intricacies of the woods and fields about him as thoroughly as Thoreau knew the region of Walden Pond, but Hardy treats nature, as he treats man, subjectively, while Thoreau is objective in his observations. To Hardy, nature is

a big, all-powerful personality, wholly apart from, and unsympathetic with man. His artist's eye not only sees the severe beauty of nature, but looks beyond to her very soul; he studies her ways until he realizes the dramatic usefulness of her personality. Nature becomes, to him, as infinite and unfathomable certainty, and one of the chief embodiments of fate. Mr. Johnson[1] suggests that Hardy's philosophy was not formulated in a dusky library but that his thoughts "seem to have come of long meditations in the open air." With this wide expanse of the universe about him, his ideas might easily dwell on the futility of man's will and actions;" the author seems awed by the evidences of the power of the inanimate. "Mr. Hardy, almost alone," says Mr. Johnson, "but for certain resemblances to Wordsworth and to Crabbe, has pondered on the country, and has brought thought to bear on it."

He loved that cauntry from which he sprang, and to which he had returned after a brief worldly career. His "Wessex" does not coincide with the old West Saxon kingdom," but includes parts of Somerset, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Devon and Hampshire as well as all of his own province of Dorset. It is a region with a proud history; that Hardy shared this pride is shown in his The Hand of Ethelberta, where Ethelberta attends Lord Montclere's archeological party at a beautiful old castle near his home. Although Hardy is one of the least sentimental of writers; yet it is the warm love of his home, the close ralationship between him and all the old sights and sounds he knows so well, rather than his philosophic stimulation,

[1] Johnson, Lionel; The Art of Thomas Hardy.

that endears him to most of his readers. Mr. Johnson suggests this quality more clearly; "Most novelists are not at home among the places of their imagination: from first to last they describe their woods and fields not as long familiarity makes them appear, but as they appear to unaccustomed eyes; there is no heart in them. But Mr. Hardy has the art of impressing upon us so strong a sense of familiarity with his scenes, that we read of Wessex and we think of our own homes."

That part of Wessex that is most lastingly imprinted on our experience after reading the Wessex novels is the grim, brown, furze-covered Egdon Heath. Egdon is dark and foreboding; it inevitably links itself in the memory with the thought of night and storms. Tess and Angel, riding to the railroad, across a stormy, swampy heath; Eustacia and Clym timing their meeting by the moon's eclipse; the fire on the heath that summons Wildeve to meet Eustacia; Diggory Venn and Wildeve gambling for Tomsin's fortune, while the glow-worms furnish the only illumination, and the little turf-grazers curiously interfere; these are some of the striking scenes which give us such a marvellous atmospheric description of Egdon and the "wild rhetoric of the night." The heath has varying effects on the souls of its inhabitants but, to all, it is full of meaning. As Tomsin Yeobright goes forth, alone, to her wedding, her aunt has vague premonitions of wrong, and the heath seems to bear out this impression with gloomy foreboding:

"Then Mrs. Yeobright saw a little figure wending its way between scratching furze-bushes, and diminishing far up the valley

a pale-blue spot in the vast field of neutral brown, solitary and undefended, except by the power of her own hope."[1]

Clym is a true child of the heath, and no amount of parisian training can make a breach in his love for this, his true home, "The shriveled voice of the heath did not alarm him, for that was familiar." He seems a definite part of his surroundings; he was permeated with its scenes, with its substance and with its odors. He might be said to be its product." Far different, however, the effect of her home on Eustacia Vye.

"To dwell on the heath without studying its meaning was like wedding a foreigner without learning his tongue. The subtle beauties of the heath were lost to Eustacia; she only caught its vapors."

Eustacia, who belonged in a throng of admirers, attributes her gloomy nature, her "hypochondriasis," to her coming to the wild heath. She would cry out in vague prayer, "Oh, deliver my heart from this fearful gloom and loneliness; send me great love, or I shall die! 'But she finds no sympathy in the bare, bald heath; it stifles her, untilshe cries madly to Wildeve, "Tis my cross, my misery, and will be my death!"

"There was no middle distance in her perspective; romantic recollections of sunny afternoons on an esplanade stood like gilded letters upon the dark tablet of surrounding Egdon."

Thus for her spirit the heath is a destroyer of romance and vitality; it is a reactionary force. It permeates the story, and

[1] The Return of the Native.

it stands for what permeates Hardy's thought and philosophy, the awful, ghastly Tr_u_th of things, which disillusions youthful Idealism and fond hope in humanity. It is the embodiment of that natural force, or nature, to which all human desires and strivings must be submissive.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles contains some marvellous nature descriptions, but these descriptions always treat of the bizarre or the awe-inspiring, in reference to the effect made on the characters. As the tragedy becomes more involved and intense, the elements of nature become more portentous; the storm or the cock's untimely crowing do not seem, however, as in Shakespeare, the accompaniments of despair, alone; in some subtle way, seems the cause, or at least a contributor to the cause, of despair. Tess and Angel are happy, and nature is happy too, but with a lurking dimness, sufficient to make Tess think of her unhappy secret.

"They met daily," the author says, "in that strange and solemn interval of time, the twilight of the morning, in the violet or pink dawn; for it was necessary to rise early, so very early, here."

And later he explains a phenomenon which would naturally interest one of his temperament.

"The gray half-tones of daybreak are not the gray half-tones of the day's close, though the degree of their shade may be the same. In the twilight of the morning, light seems active, darkness passive; in the twilight of the evening, it is the darkness which is active and crescent, and the light which is the drowsy reverse."

At this stage in the development of the story, he is dealing with the morning twilight, when "light is active," but the evening twilight comes soon enough, with but a brief and cloudy day of happiness. "Or perhaps the summer fog was more general, and the meadows lay like a white sea, out of which is scattered trees rose like dangerous rocks," is Hardy's realistic setting for a delightful pastoral. Tess and Angel wander through the fields like primitive lovers, with none other except the great inanimate forces of the universe for company.

"The spectral, half-compounded aqueous light which pervaded the open mead impressed them with a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve. At this dim, inceptive stage of the day, Tess seemed to Clare to exhibit a dignified largeness both of disposition and physique, and almost regnant power."

Tess' soul does assume a largeness out of proportion to her intellect, because of her communion with and study of the great educative forces about her. Without being able to explain her views, she has become, as Clare knows, a Pantheist. One day the workmen were talking around Dairyman Crick's table.

"'I don't know about ghosts, 'Tess was saying;"but I do know that our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive;

"The dairyman turned to her with his mouth full, his eyes charged with serious inquiry, and his great knife and fork planted erect on the table, like the beginning of a gallows. "What - really now? And is it so,maidy? he said.

"' A very easy way to feel them go; continued Tess; is to lie on the grass at night and look straight up at some big bright star; and, by fixing your mind upon it, you will soon find that you are hundreds and hundreds o' miles away from your body, which you don't seem to want at all!"

Tess, unfortunately, is not spiritually representative of her class, and Hardy, lest we should gain this erroneous impression, hastens to make the dairyman disperse such an idealized notion from our minds;

"'Now that's a rum thing, Christianner - hey? To think o' the miles I've vamped o' nights these last thirty years, courting, or trading, or for doctor or for nurse, and yet never had the least notion o' that till now, or feeled my soul rise so much as an inch above my shirt-collar.'"

This the truthful Hardy, unlike Wordswoth, would have us understand, is the average feeling of the Wessex peasant toward his surroundings.

The boy Jude finds himself not wanted at Marygreen, not even by nature. Nature shuts out her beauties from him as does life.

"The brown surface of the field went right up to the sky all round, as it was lost by degrees in the mist that shut out the actual verge and accentuated the solitude. The only marks on the uniformity of the scene were a rick of last year's produce standing in the midst of the arable, the rooks that rose at the approach, and the path athward the fallow by which he had come, trodden now by he hardly knew whom, though once by many of his own

dead family."

In The Woodlanders the atmosphere of the quiet old trees gives to the story a unity of solemn dignity. When Grace first sees Giles after her few year's schooling, he is standing in the market-place, displaying one of his fine apple trees to the townsmen. That he was ashamed of the tree, and gave it away rather than humiliate the aristocratic Grace by dragging it home behind the gig, as he had intended to do, is probably significant as typifying that straining to be un-natural which Hardy deems disastrous to the individual. A tree is the cause of Marty South's father's death; the old man's death is the event which causes Giles to lose his property; his loss is one of the forces that causes Grace to marry Fitzpiers, and the ensuing tragedy to take place. When Grace is out in the night searching for her husband, and finds Mrs. Charmond on the same mission, the trees stand in all their heartless majesty, chanting death hymns.

"She turned as if to hasten away, but Felice Charmond's sobs came to her ear; deep darkness circled her about, the funereal trees rocked and chanted their dirges and placebos around her, and she did not know which way to do."

The passionate Mrs. Charmond, too, has enough sensibility to feel that nature is unsympathetic with man but is, in some mysterious way, in sympathy with that vague force, Destiny. She wearily shuts out the daylight and the heat of the out-of-doors, and, in their place, burns a candle and sits before a fire. Fitzpier questions her: - "What does it all mean?"

"She sat in an easy-chair, her face being turned away. 'Oh! she murmured, 'it is because the world is so dreary outside. Sarrow and bitterness in the sky, and floods of agonized tears against the panes. I lay awake last night, and I could hear the scrape of snails creeping up the window-glass; it was so sad! '"

This, then, is the home of Hardy's peasants. Miss Lina Wright Berle[1] sees in the customary Wessex farms and hamlets, as Hardy pictures them, everything that would foster the immorality of his abnormal characters. Hardy's peasants, however, are not abnormal, but unusually sagacious; and the immorality is caused by characters, or contacts with characters which are products of a totally different environment than the wholesome Wessex.

Hardy's philosophy is external; that is, the forces that govern men's lives from without rather than from within. Man's destiny seems to rest in the hands of the surroundings in which he is "placed"; the placing is accredited to an unaccountable force. The plots seem to be woven around some place, such as Egdon Heath or "The Ring" in The Mayor of Casterbridge, and not to depend on characters or the play of incidents or happenings of these characters. The action seems rather to be directed by some subtle, inevitable influence of place. As Tess tells her tragic secret to her husband, "the fire in the grate looked impish - demoniacally funny," "the fender grinned idly," and "the light from the water-bottle was merely engaged in a chromatic problem." As Angle Clare's unnatural lapse into mental and conventional drowsiness when he comes to the

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[1] Berle, Lina Wright: George Eliot and Thomas Hardy.

Talbothays dairy, is due to the drawsiness of the scene; "Immediately he began to descend from the upland to the fat alluvial soil below the atmosphere grew heavier, the languid perfume of the summer fruits, the mists, the hay, the flowers, formed therein a vast pool of odor which at this hour seemed to make the animals, the very bees and butterflies, drawsy." The naturally keen, alert, intelligent youth is out of place in this dulling atmosphere. The love affair of Angel and Tess, culminating in a marriage which is wrong in the light of both their experiences, is clearly due to its lulling, idyllic setting. As Hardy explains, 'The hot weather of July had crept onward upon them unaware, and the atmosphere of the flat vale hung heavy as an opiate over the dairy folk, the cows, and the trees." Christminster is the unwelcoming home of Jude Fawley; its learning and asperations beckon to his spirit, if he could be said to have had a spirit at the time of his second visit there.

'"I love the place.'" he tells Sue, "'Although I know how it hates all men like me - the so called Self-taught - how it scorns our labored acquisitions, when it should be the first to respect them; how it sneers at our false quantities and mispronunciations, when it should say, I see you want help, my poor friend! Nevertheless, it is the center of the universe for me, because of my early dream; and nothing can alter it. Perhaps it will soon wake up, and be generous. I pray so! I should like to go back to live there-perhaps to die there!"

This same Christminster, with its quiet dignity and moral integrity that, quite as much as her interpretation of the

death of her children, brings the erring Sue to a semblance of sanity though belated and selfish. Elizabeth-Jane's unhappiness lies in being brought to an inharmonious setting;"thus she lived on, a dumb, deep-feeling, great-eyed creature, construed by not a single contiguous being." She is constantly subject to the reprimands of the Mayor for thanking the parlor-maid or for using picturesque, dialect words which are "terrible marks of the beast to the truly genteel." Henchard himself is a peasant, and his amassing of huge wealth and assumption of social position are tragic in their consequences. "He tells Elizabeth-Jane sadly,

"'I have tried to peruse and learn all my life, but the more I try to know the more ignorant I seem!"[1]

He belongs in the fields rather than in the drawing-room or at the head of the council table. Hardy causes him to reassume his rightful place, when Farfrae employs him, a bankrupt old man, as hay-trusser; thus he returns physically to that state of existence in which he was before money and misfortune had entered his life, and crushed it. Hardy would have us believe that ruin always lies in the wake of that individual who is out of harmony with his environment. Wildeve says of the misplaced Eustacia, "Such a rare plant in such a wild place it grieves me to see;'" Bethsheba Everdene does not belong in her pastoral setting. It would seem that Hardy found himself a misfit in London, and so came back to Wessex. At any rate, he seems to sustain certain premonitions about another country youth, Stephen Smith, who has gone to study architecture in London;

[1] The Mayor of Casterbridge.

"Judging from his look, London was the last place in the world that one would have imagined to be the scene of his activities; such a face surely could not be nourished amid smoke and mud and fog and dust; such an open countenance could never even have seen anything of the weariness, the fever, and the fret of Babylon the Second."

Perhaps the general happiness or, rather, peacefulness of the peasant - characters is due to the fact that they do not at all rebel against their surroundings; they are unquestioning children of the soil. Their position, Hardy suggests, "was perhaps the happiest of all positions in the social scale, that is to say, above the line at which neediness ends, and below the line at which the "convenances" begin to cramp natural feeling, and the stress of threadbare modishness makes too little of enough." Like Tess at the dairyman's, they are "physically and socially at ease among their surroundings."

Just as man is influenced and, as Jude says," circumstanced " by the inanimate things about him, so is he affected in a passive way, by the external lives of the people about him." 'You are a chamelion,'" says Eustacia to the fluctuating Wildeve, but this seems unfortunately true to a certain extent of all mankind as Hardy sees it. Mr. Melbury has noticed this quality of the dominating influence of environment over inherent force chiefly in women:

"A woman takes her color from the man she's walking with. The woman who looks an unquestionable lady when she's with a

polished-up fellow, looks a mere tawdry imitation article when she's hobbing and nobbing with a homely blade."[1]

Mr. Johnson seems to recognize Hardy's tragedy of social misfits. He writes,

"Mr. Hardy is fond of pourtraying the troubles that come from the infusion of a little experience, a little education, dazzling and disquieting, in the old, placid, homely village lives; or of showing the effect upon new, vigourous mind and blood, of contact with hoar,'effetè antiquity."[2]

Grace Melbury and Stephen Smith with their "little learning and their affairs with people of a higher social order, belong to the first class, while Angel Clare and Fitzpiers belong to the second. Tess' tragedy lies in the insane ambition of the Durbeyfields to be that which Nature had not intended them to be, D'Urbervilles. The reader cannot well refrain from muttering, with Clare, "I think that parson who unearthed your pedigree would have done better if he had held his tongue." That there are inevitable and unavoidable class distinctions Hardy does not once deny; his democratic spirit, however, makes aristocracy repugnant to him. Diggory Venn becomes a hated reddelman, and gives up his farm with fine disdain; he "relinquished his proper station in life for want of interest in it." He assumes the itinerant existence of a gypsy, for, after all," only a few inches of mud had kept him and his family from being gypsies themselves." Clym Yeobright places his native existence in the scale opposite his experiences in Parisian

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1. The Woodlanders.
2. Johnson, Lionel; The Art of Thomas Hardy.

life, and finds, "'that I was trying to be like people who had hardly anything in common with myself. I was endeavoring to put off one sort of life for another sort of life, which was not better than the life I had known before. It was simply different,'" Again, when contemplating the happy prospect of being a turf-and furze-cutter, he tells the stormy Eustacia,"'The more I see of life the more do I perceive that there is nothing particularly great in its greatest walks and nothing particularly small in the mine of furze-cutting.'" The simple rustic philosophers in Under the Greenwood Tree utter some of Hardy's most pointed expressions of the indifference in importance of class segregation. There is a certain feeling of dignity and superiority in the inference about a certain peasant friend.

"'Ay; one of these up-country London ink-bottle fellers would call Geoffrey a fool.'"

And Enoch the trapper uses a bit of fine irony when he says, "For without money, man is a shadder!'" There is no class pride which can subdue the ambitions of a man in love, however, and Dick Dewy, at least once in his life, longs for great riches. Even in his exuberance, his wants seem somewhat modest:

"'I wish I was rich as a squire when he's poor as a crow, I'd soon ask Fancy something."

In the early part of his literary career, Hardy seems to have had a more artificial basis for his democracy than in his later years. Ethelberta's charm seems to have come from a polish put on her by a contact with the social world, rather than from any

intrinsic grace. The peasant people among who she had been reared seem foreign to her.

"The elegant young lady, as she had the right to be called if she cared for the definition, arrested all the local attention when she emerged in the summer-evening light with that diadem - and - sceptre bearing. Many people for reasons of heredity discover such graces only in those whose vestibules are lined with ancestral mail, forgetting that a bear may be taught to dance."

Hardy makes no attempt to protest against inequality in the social order; that is the natural way of life. He is not socialistic. The peasant is very seldom contrasted to the man of higher rank, and in such a case, the ordinary rustic is often shown at a disadvantage. The dignity of Henry Knight's approach to "The Crags," for example, is suggested in the description of his rustic companion. "Behind him wandered, helter-skelter, a boy of whom Knight had briefly inquired the way to Endelstow; and by that natural law of physics which causes lesser bodies to gravitate to the greater, this boy had kept at his heels, whistling as he went, with his eyes fixed on Knight's boots as they rose and fell."

Hardy often shows an incorporation of the Wordsworthian idea that worldly experience, and especially learning, is destructive to natural purity and simplicity of purpose. Tess Durbeyfield is described at first as " a mere vessel of emotion, untinctured by experience." And Grace Melbury, the wood-land girl, voices that same principle of Romanticism, when she upraids her father for giving her an education.

"I wish you had never thought of educating me. I wish I worked in the woods like Marty South. I hate genteel life, and I want to be no better than she.' "'Why? said her amazed father. "'Because cultivation has only brought me inconveniences and troubles. I say again I wish you had never sent me to those fashionable schools you set your mind on. It all arose out of that, father. If I had stayed at home I should have married' - She closed up her mouth suddenly and was silent; and he saw that she was not far from crying."

This Woodlander's daughter, before her marriage, had intuitively sensed the discord that would result by subjecting her own native soul in surroundings to which she was akin only distantly through a superficial education. She burst in upon her father, a few days before the intended wedding; "'I have been thinking very much about my position this morning - ever since it was light; she began, excitedly, and trembling so that she could hardly stand. 'I feel it is a false one, I wish not to marry Mr. Fitzpiers.'"

Good Old Grammer Oliver feels, too, that there are social barriers between the two, and somewhat superstitiously believes that, to break down these barriers, will result in evil. At least she seems disturbed at the outlook, and mutters, "'But though she's a lady herself and worthy of any such as he, it do seem to me that he ought o marry somebody of the sort of Mrs. Charmond, and that Miss Grace should make the best of Winterborne.'"

It is the absence of an intrusion in socity by Hardy's peasants, after the fatal advent of Ethelberta, that gives them

their simple charm. They feel, with the vicar, that, without money and patrician genealogy, Stephen Smith is quite another man than that Stephen Smith of the vicar's fond imagination. Stephen's mother is not at all the average rustic in her ambitions for her son, and to be truly Hardian, she unconsciously refutes her own argument:

"'And come to that, she's not a bit too high for you or you too low for her. See how careful I be to keep myself up. I'm sure I never stop for more than a minute together to talk to any journeyman people; and I never invite anybody to our party o' Christmases who are not in business for themselves.'"

The country-folk are contented with things as they are; there is a dignity and sturdiness in their conservatism that is affected by no relative consideration of their superiors. Stephen is proud to confess that his father was a journeyman mason and his mother a dairy-maid. Although Elfride is shocked at the disclosure, he ruthlessly pursues.

"'She continued to attend to a dairy long after my father married her; and I remember very well how, when I was very young, I used to go to the milking, look on at the skimming, sleep through the churning, and make believe I helped her. Ah, that was a happy time enough!'

"'No,never O not happy,' "'Yes, it was' "'I don't see how happiness could be where the drudgery of dairy-work had to be done for a living - the hands red and chapped, and the shoes clogged... Stephen,I do own that it seems odd to regard you in the light of having been so rough in your youth, and done menial things

of that kind.' (Stephen withdrew an inch or two from her side.)"[1]

How pitifully meagre are the figures of those supposedly noble characters, Clare, Fitzpiers, and Knight, by the side of the simple folk whose aims they have defeated by reason of their glamour. Their superior education and refinement, it seems has only found them lacking in the big truths of life. Their characters are not stable and firm.

The most popular of Hardy's characters are his rustics that compose the chorus or background for his tragedies. They are like Shakespeare's peasants both in purpose and in reality. Their "close, narrow and undistracted view of things,"[2] their unconscious sagacity, their superstitious philosophy, all combine to make them interesting but very human and likable. They are a definite part and product of the scenes about them; with them, not only does "nature hold the human action in solution,"[3] but she determines their very thoughts and, in a sense, carves out their physiques. We feel that poor Thomas Leaf," a weak, lath-like form, trotting and stumbling along with one shoulder forward and the head inclined to the left, his arms dangling nervelessly in the wind as if they were empty sleeves,"[4] had been conditioned by a Malthusian environment. The soil has its ineradicable effect even though some may not "notice how a whitey-brown creeps out of the earth over us."[5] Joey, Ethelberta's newly - acquired brother-page, has been reprimanded for

1. A Pair of Blue Eyes.
2. Encyclopedia Brittanica; Thomas Hardy.
3. Abercrombie, Lascelles; Thomas Hardy.
4. Under the Greenwood Tree.
5. The Woodlanders.

his superfluous use of colloquial expressions, but he staunchly defends himself:

"If I talk the Wessex way 'tisn't for want of knowing better; 'tis because my staunch nater makes me bide faithful to our old ancient institutions."

There are many varieties of peasant folks whom Hardy portrays; farm hands, in The Mayor of Casterbridge; wood-shappers in The Woodlanders; shepherds in 'Far from the Madding Crowd; dairymaids in Tess of the D'Urbervilles; furze-cutters in The Return of the Native; carriers in a Pair of Blue Eyes; nondescript labourers in Jude the Obscure; servants in The Hand of Ethelberta; and Cottagers in a Pair of Blue Eyes. The author seems to know all of these occupations equally well, and is as much at home when describing a sheep-bleeding or the stacking of a rick, as when picturing a honey-taking or an indoor scene of butter-making. He knows his characters and their doings by heart, and he gives us both with a precision tempered only by sympathy and an understanding that penetrates the surface.

The rustics are not perfect, or in anyway outstanding individual in their attainments; they are not, like Eustacia Vye, "the raw material of divinity."[1] Their chief virtue is their absolute honesty and self-sufficiency; they are dependent only on nature for their reprobation or blame.

Like Arnold's stars,

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see -

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[1] The Return of the Native.

These demand not that the things around them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy."[1]

Their primitive superstitions about places and things, and their Pantheistic revelry in everything about them, makes of them, at heart, Pagan. They share Hardy's fatalism, "Twas to be" is their only consolation. They should never think it in their power to alter the direction of the current of the universe when "God's not in his heaven; all's wrong' with the world." As Tess rests at that "Temple of the Winds, " Stonebenge, on that last night of her life, she says to Clare,"'And you used to say at Talbothays that I was a heathen. So now I am at home!"

Tranter Dewy tells his son; "'Your mother's charms was more in the manner than in the mataurial.'" And therein lies the charm of all Hardy's humble folk. They have no intrinsic grace, the "matayrial" that is a product only of generations of cultivation, but they employ what is theirs with some a simplicity of motive that Hardy finds here the candour and sincerity for which he longs. They instinctively loathe what is sham, and cannot conceive of a person's actions not tallying with his feelings. Martin Connister and John Smith stand discussing Lady Luxellian's death; John reports the news, "'Tis done and past. I see a bundle of letters go off an hour after her death. Sich wonderful black rims as they letters had - half an inch wide, at the very least!

"'Too much,' observed Martin, 'In short, 'tis out of the question that a human being can be so mournful as black edges

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[1] Arnold, Self-Dependence.

half an inch wide. I'm sure people don't feel more than a very narrow border when they feels most of all.'"[1]

The Mayor of Casterbridge represents some of the best and the worst qualities of peasant people. Michael Henchard, a hay-trusser, makes a solemn oath, which "May I be strook dumb, blind, and helpless if I break." Against desperate odds, he regards his oath as sacred, and the keeping of it unquestionable. There is a rugged honesty, almost to the point to bluntness, exhibited by the rustics outside the church during the second wedding of Sue and Michael:

"The Scotchman, who assisted as groomsman, was of course the only one present beyond the chief actors, who knew the true situation of the contracting parties. He, however, was too inexperienced, too thoughtful, too judicial, to enter into the scene in its dramatic aspect. That required the special genius of Christopher Coney, Soloman Longways, Buzzford, and their fellows. But they knew nothing of the secret; though as the time for coming out of church drew on, they gathered on the pavement adjoining, and expounded the subject according to their lights.

"' 'Tis five and forty years since I had my settlement in this here town,' said Coney; but daze me if I ever see a man wait as long before, to get so little! There's a chance even for thee after this, Nance Mockridge.'............"Turning, he saw a circular disc reticulated with creases, and recognized the smiling countenance of the fat woman who had asked for another song at The Three

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1. A Pair of Blue Eyes.

Mariners. 'Well, Mother Cuxson,' he said, 'how's this? Here's Mrs. Newson, a mere skellinton, has got another husband to keep her, while a woman of your tonnage have not.'"

Their honesty and spontaneity often leads to disaster in some degree. Fancy Day finds that she must employ that social implement, choice, and she discards her inclinations along with the attractive Parson Maybold, in order to marry the steady Dick!" 'but how plain and sorry a man looks in the rain, with no umbrella, and wet through! '" Giles and Grace, in their simplicity and real sincerity of motive, plung head-long into despair. Grace firmly believes that some erroneous news of supposed divorce laws has righted all wrongs, and mitigated all evil.

"To hear these two poor Arcadian innocents talk of imperial law would have made a humane person weep who should have known what a dangerous structure they were building upon for supposed knowledge. They remained in thought, like children in the presence of the incomprehensible."

All of Hardy's pleasure he gains through his peasants. Although many of them are mere caricatures, he uses no biting satire in depicting the class. The humour usually comes literally through them and from them rather than in them. The tranter explains deprecatingly to Mr. Maybold that Thomas Leaf is "rather silly by nature and would never get fat; though he's a excellent tribble, and so we keep him on,'" and the tuburcular treble himself hastens to say,"'I never had no head, sir.'" There is another of these sketches in The Return of the Native.

"A faltering man, with reedy hair, no shoulders, and a great quantity of wrist and ankle beyond his clothes, advanced a step or two by his own will, and was pushed by the will of the others a half dozen steps more. He was Grandfer Cantle's youngest son,'"

Such terse descriptive power is like Carlyle's portraiture in the seizure of a central characteristic and the subjugation of all other features to that one. There is a wealth a suggestive portrait painting in the revelations of the way in which the peasants regard their social superiors. Marty South detects Mrs. Charmond's yawn, and does some quick reasoning.' So rich and so powerful and yet to yawn," she murmured,'Then things don't fay with she any more than with we.' '" And the doctor's abstractions seem strangely marvellous to Grammer Oliver's ears:

"'And yet he's a projeck, a real projeck, and says the oddest of rozums. "Ah, Grammer, he said, at another time, "let me tell you that Everything is Nothing. There's only me and not me in the whole world.''"[1]

The quaint faith of the cottagers in the current legends and gossip about their superiors is best shown by an ingenious story[2] told by the driver of the dog-cart bearing Stephen Smith to Endelstow Vicarage. He points out Lord Luxellian's home, Endelstow House, and in his official capacity of guide, explains,"'Well, his family is no better than my own 'a b'lieve.' "'How is that?' "'Hedgers and ditches by rights. But once in ancient times one of 'em, when he was at work, changed clothes with King Charles the Second,

1. The Woodlanders.
2. A Pair of Blue Eyes.

and saved the king's life. King Charles came up to him like a common man and said off hand,"Man in the smock-frock,my name is Charles the Second and that's the truth on't. Will you lend me your clothes?" "I don't mind if I do, "said Hedger Luxellian, and they changed there and then." "Now mind ye." King Charles the Second said, like a common man, as he rode away, "if ever I come to the crown, you come to court,knock at the door, and say out bold, 'Is King Charles the Second at home?' Tell your name, and they shall let you in, and you shall be made a lord." Now, that was very nice of Master Charley?'"

The simple lives of Hardy's rustics seem marvellously affected by music. Bathsheba sang, to the accompaniment of Gabriel Oak's flute, and the humble little group,her employers, sat spell bound.' The troubles of the Millstock choir, their carol singing at Fancy Day's window, the illtimed serenade of Wildeve and Tomsin by the furze-gathers, the Egdon murmers at Mrs. Yeobright's: amateur as these performances may be, they all have a poignant effect on those engaged in the activities. Of all the interesting characters in Under the Greenwood Tree, - Master Spinks, the scholar whose head was "finished," Mr. Penny the shoe-maker who traced family trees through feet, the simple-minded Leaf and Elizabeth Endorfield, the sensible witch, - the most unique and powerful is the old musician, William Dewy. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Dairyman Crick relates a story about his musical powers:

"'This man was a coming home along from a wedding where he had been playing his fiddle, one fine moonlight night,

and for shortness' sake he took a cut across Forty-acres, where a bull was out to grass. The bull seed William and took after him, horns aground, begad; and though William runned his best, he found he'd never reach the fence and get over in time to save himself. Well, as a last thought, he pulled out his fiddle as he went, and struck up a jig, turning toward the bull as he played, and backing toward the corner. The bull softened down, and stood still, looking hard at William Dewy, who fiddled on and on; till a sort of a smile stole over the bull's face. But no sooner did William stop his playing and turn to get over the hedge, than the bull would stop smiling, and lower his horns and step forward. When he'd scraped till about four o'clock he felt he would verily have to give over soon, and he said to himself, "There's only this last tune between me and eternal welfare. Heaven save me, or I'm a done man! ..... It came into his head to play a trick on that bull. So he broke into the 'Trinity Hymn, just as at Christmas Carol-singing; when, lo and behold, down went the bull on his bended knees, in his ignorance, just as if 'twere the true "Trinity night and hour. As soon as his horned friend were down, William turned, clinked off like a long-dog, and jumped safe over hedge, before the praying bull had got on his feet again to take after him!

The peasants are direct in all their action; they have not been schooled in restraint, and know no middle course. The uncouth old furmity-woman exposes the mayor before the assembled court, by telling of his sale of his wife years before, which she had witnessed in her own public house at the Weydon Fair. There were two

bridges in Casterbridge where the ruined or despondent always came; those who haunted the one of stone pondered on their shame, while the rustics who came in their unhappiness to the bridge of brick merely came to wear off their irritation. 'Instead of sighing at their adversity, they spat, and instead of saying the iron had entered into their souls, they said they were down on their luck." These same characters - Japp, Mother Cuxsom, Christopher Coney and Abel Whittle - have an unusual method of adjusting social evils, by means of the rude skimmity-ride.

Hardy's predominant characteristic is his democracy, and in this democracy rests his excellence and his disquieting, even, demoralizing humanitarianism. Mr. Duffin says,

"This is perhaps his supreme achievement; to have gone down among the unnoticed, forgotten myriads of dull, prosaic, average humanity, and discovered here and there among them lives as mysteriously interesting and as spiritually adventurous as were ever those of queens and emperors ....In a sense this is Hardy's special contribution to the Spirit of the Age - Democracy."

These few mysterious and spiritually adventurous characters, such as Tess and Sue, I do not believe to be representative of Hardy's view of the average peasant. Rather are those collossal but, in a sense, static figures of old William Dewy, Gabriel Oak, and Diggory Venn examples of the best of their class. They are wholesome, fearless and dispassionate. The heroic unselfishness of the reddelman's love for Tomsin, I think is the sturdiness of a hopeless man, working for no ideal of

his own, but for the happiness of those around him. Diggory is like Gabriel Oak, but of more heroic proportions. These men, who were "known by their every-day apparel rather than their Sunday clothes,"these ordinary, "every-day sort of men," are solid foundations on whom society may build and far, far removed from the instability and social anarchy of Tess and Jude. I do not believe that Thomas Hardy is "morally indifferent"; he sees rather the two points-of-view, society's and that of the "victim of society." Although he feels a deep sympathy with the criminal, he does not, even in Jude the Obscure, leave the impression that any change in the social system could better matters. With the excpetion of Jude the Obscure, every Wessex novel contrasts impurity unfavorably with purity, and the purity is the invariable position of those living near the soil, - of the peasants. Thus they represent what is constructive, and essentially fine, in Thomas Hardy.

Romanticism and Realism in Peasant Fiction.

After the reform bill of 1832, Felix Holt spoke to the working-men,

"We have been sarcastically called in the House of Commons the future masters of the country; and if that sarcasm contains any truth, it seems to me that the first thing we had better think of is, our heavy responsibility, - that is to say, the terrible risk we run of working mischief and missing good, as others have done before us."[1]

The air was heavy with a fervor of democracy, and as a result of the prevalent political agitation, there arose a literature _of_ and _for_ the people. In England, as in France, this democratic literary movement developed out of the chaos of the French Revolution. As Felix Holt suggested, legislating bodies had given the common people a political status; it remained for literature to make that position sound. Writers living in such stirring times could not be neutral on its issues. They found themselves writing for a public intensely interested in men. George Sand, as politician and as editor, staunchly supported the extreme _left wing_. Happily, in her later life and work, her early violence was mellowed into an Idealistic Humanitarianism, much better suited to her power. George Eliot was an intimate friend of most of the leading economists of her day, but, as she dwelt in the realm of "higher thought," her influence on democracy is not so easily discerned as

[1] George Eliot's Essays - Address to Working Men.

Mme. Sand's.

Thomas Hardy, though personally a recluse perhaps did more than either of these to democratize literature and thought. Indeed, he preaches such unbounded individualism that the welfare of society is overlooked - He brought the new member of the commonwealth, the insignificant peasant, to the notice of a startled public. Mr. H. C. Duffin recognizes this as Hardy's chief contribution to his age.

"Few have dared to credit the school-teacher or the hay-trusser with the possession of a soul, much less dreamed of going to the trouble of dissecting it and showing its grandeur and beauty. This is perhaps his supreme achievement; to have gone down among the unnoticed, forgotten myriads of dull, prosaic, average humanity, and discovered here and there among them, lives as mysteriously interesting and as spiritually adventurous, as were even those of queens and emperors ....In a sense it is Hardy's special contribution to the Spirit of the Age. He first declared Demos himself to be a person of fathomless subtlety and Olympian grandeur."

This close association with the temper of their times gave to the peasant writers an inevitable motive of reform. Just as Charles Kingsley and Dickens fought against the causes of human poverty and misery in urban life, so these authors, in varying degrees, sought to ameliorate the unfortunate conditions in the country life about them. There is less evidence of definite reform in George Sand than in the English writers; she seems to regard her characters as charming friends, whose ignorance and superstition are

but inseparable parts of their charm. Mauprat does not think it advisable to remove Patience from his picturesque setting by means of an education foreign to his nature.

"Thanks to the accidents of my birth and fortune, I had arrived at complete development, while Patience, to the hour of his death, remained groping in the darkness of an ignorance from which he neither would nor could emerge."[1]

To George Eliot and to Thomas Hardy, however, the idea of a mission seemed always to be present. George Eliot writes,"To find right remedies and right methods - Here is the great function of knowledge."[2] She might have added, "of fiction, too," for her novels seem experiment-tables on which she is constantly working at the problem. Hardy's mission is less evident; he published no addresses to Working-Men. But he shows us that "characters deteriorate in time of need;" he makes us sympathize with Elizabeth-Jane's "field-mouse fear of the coulter of destiny despite fair promise, which is common among the thoughtful who have suffered early from poverty, and oppression;" We feel a sense of ashamed social responsibility toward her "whose youth had seemed to teach that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain." And yet Miss Berle[3] insists that Thomas Hardy is indifferent to morality!

This demoractic movement in fiction is a curious outgrouth of the Romantic tendency in earlier poetry. George Sand in early youth, eagerly absorbed the vague naturalistic and optimisti

1. Mauprat. p. 131.
2. George Eliot's Essays - Address to Working-Men.
3. Lina Wright Berle - George Eliot and Thomas Hardy.

theories of her master, Rousseau. At that saner period in her life, when she wrote her delightful pastorals, she had modified her young enthusiastic ideals of life, but she did not discard the exuberant spirit of her old teacher. The peasant ignorance, for instance, was not, for her, a cause of concern and pity; she, rather, quietly accepted it as a part of their delicious naïveté. Brulette, who has had the superior advantage of a little learning at the hands of the parish priest, speaks of Joseph as an "egoist." Tiennet does not know the meaning of the word, but George Sand would give him the superior quality of intuition and insight by causing him to interpret the little girl's statement as meaning that Joseph is afflicted with a mortal malady.[1] After all, Joseph's disease _is_ fatal.

George Sand, in her pagan worship of nature and her love for the countryman because she feels he absorbs the bigness and the purity of that nature, - seems far more like Wordsworth than his English literary descendants, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. Wordsworth came to his love of humanity _through_ his study of nature; he heard the "still, sad music of _humanity_"[2] _while_ listening to the voice of the brook near Tinturn Abbey. To George Eliot Nature is not at all allied with the soul of man, except, perchance, in playing an unmerciful part in his downfall. Her peasants, unlike Michael, find no sympathy or seeming understanding in nature.

"What were little Tina and her trouble in this mighty torrent, rushing from one awful unknown to another? Lighter than the

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[1] George Sand - Les Maîtres Sonneurs. p. 31
[2] Wordsworth - Tinturn Abbey.

smallest center of quivering life in the waterdrop, hidden and uncared for as the pulse of anguish in the breast of the tiniest bird that has fluttered down to its nest with the long-sought food, and has found the nest torn and empty."[1.]

The degree of the influence of the nature-school on Thomas Hardy is harder to determine. His position is not so positive as George Eliot's, and far more complex. Like a true Romanticist, he proclaims the happiness of the simple peasant, "below the line at which the convenances begin to cramp natural feeling, and the stress of threadbare modishness makes too little of enough."[2.] Like George Eliot, though, he sees in nature no friendly accord with man; she is, rather, but the objective embodiment of a heartless destiny. Hardy has been accused of being immoral and of carrying out the principles of free love intimated by the early Romanticists, Rousseau and Byron. To me his work seems to repudiate such an accusation; his nemeses point toward chastity and conformity to the tried laws of mankind. True it is that Sue Bridewell thinks she finds her ideal of earthly happiness in a shepherd's hut.

"' I rather like this,'said Sue, while their entertainers were clearing away the dishes, 'outside all laws except gravitation and germination.'"

But her lover quickly retorts.

"'You only think you like it; you don't. You are quite

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1. George Eliot - Scenes of Clerical Life - p. 222.
2. Thomas Hardy - Tess of the D'Urbervilles. p. 144.

a product of civilization.'"[1] And Sue, after years of blind striving for her romantic ideal finds that her own instincts and nature are not moral guides. She longs to have sacrificed everything to duty, and she cries, "Self-renunciation - that's everything![2]

"'We went about loving each other too much,"'she says to Jude, '" indulging ourselves to utter selfishness with each other! We said - do you remember? - that we would make a virtue of joy. I said it was Nature's intention, Nature's law and raison d'être, that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us - instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart. What dreadful things I said! And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word!'"[3]

Mathew Arnold recognized as George Sand's ground-motive "the sentiments of the ideal life," and as the fundamental basis of romantic appeal, an undaunted Idealism. When he went to see her as a "youthful enthusiastic foreigner who had read her works with delight," he was left with a single impression of "simplicity, frank cordial simplicity."[4] Her search is, like Wordsworth's, for a vague, ideal truth, and she protests that her sentiment is not exaggerated.

"What I am", she says, "everyone can be; what I see, everyone can see; what I hope, everyone can attain. It is only necessary to love truth, and I believe that everyone would feel the need of finding it."[5]

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1. Hardy, Jude the Obscure. p. 163.
2. Hardy, Jude the Obscure, p. 411.
3. Hardy, Jude the Obsure, p. 403.
4. Mathew Arnold - Mixed Essays - George Sand.
5. Questions d' Art et de Litterature. Prefaces Generales 11.

To make everyone love the truth as she sees it, then, she writes in a vein directly opposed to George Eliot's. Unlike the dogged fatalism of Adam Bede or Tom Tulliver, the outlook of George Sand's characters, in her peasant novels, is invariably happy. Le Grand-Bucheux foresees a future of perfect bliss for his little family, because his needs are unselfish, and simple -

"'I will be happy,'" he says, "'to make the wheat grow, no more to fight the shadows of the Good God.'" - he had been a wood-cutter - "' and to compose my little songs in my old way, in the evening on my door-step, in the midst of my family, without going to drink the wine of others, and without making others jealous.'"[1]

M. Emile Moselly enthusiastically excuses Mme. Sand for her rosy view of humanity by saying that "with her, as with Goethe, as with the greatest, the real for a long time and habitually observed, is transmuted to the appearance of poetry."[2]

There is none of this perfection of the simple life in the works of George Eliot or Thomas Hardy. Their attitude toward Romantic idealization might be found in Hardy's remark about Tess' lips.

"But no; they were not perfect. And it was the touch of the imperfect upon the intended perfect that gave the sweetness, because it was that which gave the humanity."[3]

[1] George Sand - Les Maîtres Sonneurs. p. 391.
[2] Les Femmes Illustres - p. 8.
[3] Hardy - Tess of the D'Urbervilles - p. 169.

To Hardy, human character is made up of opposing elements, good and bad, noble and ridiculous. Gabriel Oak, who was "never very clever on his inside," and who "walked unassumingly, as though he had no great claim on the world's room, "was yet a gigantic, manly figure in life's drama. Perhaps, in his effort to be realistic at all costs, Hardy becomes at times grotesque. To compare the "red interior of her mouth" when she yawned, to a snake's, or to say that Tess' beautiful hair became "clammy, till it hardly was better than sea-weed," - such analogies are superfluously incongruous. Instead of a lovely picture of domestic happiness such as George Sand gives us in La Mare au Diable, Hardy paints in grey half-tones the Durbeyfield ship in full sail.

"If the heads of the Durbeyfield family chose to sail into difficulty, disaster, starvation, disease, degradation, death, thither were these half-dozen little captives under hatches compelled to sail with them - six helpless creatures, who had never been asked if they wished for life on any terms, much less if they wished for it on such hard conditions as were involved in being of the shiftless house of Durbeyfield."[1.]

As an integral part of George Sand's Idealism and as an innate element of her personality, she had an unbounded faith in the goodness of man. She writes indignantly to Flaubert,

"And you, friend, wish that I say: man is so made; crime is his expression, infamy is his nature? No, a hundred times, No! "

[1.] Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p 21.

George Eliot seems to have a directly opposing attitude toward her fellow-men. Partly through her association with the philosopher Lewes, and partly through a scientific mania for investigation in her own nature, she scanned mankind through a microscope which magnified all his weaknesses. To her, then, humanity in the lump - and especially rustic humanity - is base; only a few noble lights like Adam Bede or Silas Marner shine out in the prevailing gloom. Bob Jokin who promises to be one of these pure lights, yet fails because of his every-day dishonest dealings as a peddler of flannels.- "I clap my thumb at the end o' the yard," he tells Maggie proudly, "and cut o' the hither side of it, and the old women aren't up to 't."[1.] The author pictures the meanness of her subjects in no more convincing way than by telling of their insatiable love of gossip. It was so with the people of Milby:

"I am by no means sure, she cautiously proceeds with her accusation - "that if the good people of Milby had known the truth about the Countess Czerlaski, they would not have been considerably disappointed to find that it was very far from being as bad as they imagined."[2.]

Hardy, as I have already said, seems to me to take the mid-passage between George Sand and George Eliot in his fundamental attitude toward human characters; he, I believe, plotted his course between the Scylla of excessive Romanticism and the

1. George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss. p. 299.
2. George Eliot, Scenes of Clerical Life, Amos Barton, Ch. 4.

Charybdis of Materialism. To him, men are not good or bad because of that portion of life to which they belong, but because of a motive force within them. George Sand thought Germain was noble because he was a peasant and lived close to nature; George Eliot thought Bob Jokin could not help but be bad because of a like environment. Hardy thought man was good or bad as he willed to be, regardless of the stratum of society to which he belonged; Angel Clare voices this philosophy when he says,

"'Distinction does not consist in the facile use of a contemptible set of conventions, but in being numbered among those who are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report - as you are, my Tess.'"[1]

From the contemplation of the basic qualities of man's nature would arise the question, "Is he master of his own destiny?" A type of literature dealing with such superstitious figures as peasants, to be most artistic, would adopt the belief of those peoples in the inefficacy of man's actions. George Sand's powerful faith in humanity, however, would admit no such theory. Landry, it is true, says somewhat passively, "You see indeed that fate decrees it, and you know that it is necessary not to go against the will of fate." But Mme. Sand's characters are subject to no great power outside themselves; their destiny is in their own hearts. Sylvinet and Joseph, the two really tragic figures in her pastorals are victims of their own selfishness. She bitterly upbraids Flaubert for his pessimistic nonchanlance after the disaster of the Franco-

[1] Tess of the D'Urbervilles. p. 222.

Prussian war:

"France agonizes, that is certain; we are all sick, unstrung, ignorant and discouraged; to say that this was wr<u>it</u>ten, that it had to be so, that that has always been and will always be, t<u>h</u>at is to begin again the fable of the teacher and the child who drowned himself. So much to say immediately: this is so; but if you add: this does not concern me, you are mistaken."[1.]

George Eliot, of course, is quite as negative as Mme. Sand is positive. The doctrine of "thy daily stage of du<u>t</u>y run" is not at all compatible with imitiative. Seth was bid not to"be in a hurry to fix and choose your own lot," but he must rather "wait to be guided." Such a hopeless view of human endeavor leads naturally to pessimism in regard to all effort. It leads Mrs. Poyser to moan, "As for farming, it's putting money into your pocket with your right hand and fetching it out wi' your left. As fur as I can see, it's raising victual for other folks and just getting a mouthful for yourself and your children as you go along."[2.]

Although Hardy, unlike George Eliot, was conscious of both the greatness and futility in man's life, and although he recognized the nobility and power of the human will, he nevertheless makes his characters subservient to an awe-inspiring power. Sue Bridewell calls this Power above us, to whose ancient wrath we must conform, God; Jude says, "It is onlyman and senseless circumstance."[3]

1. Correspondence with Flaubert, p. 272.
2. Adam Bede, Chap. VI.
3. Jude the Obscure, p. 407.

Henry Knight attributes Elfride's death to "the coarse elements of accident," but Stephen Smith is doubtful. Tess regrets that her lot fell on a blighted star when there were so many more whole and sound. Angel Clare adopts an atheistic solution by saying,

"God's not in his heaven; all's wrong with the world."

Hardy himself ascribes to the grim dark figure against whom man is ever vainly battling the appellations of Chance, Blind Circumstance, the Die of Destiny, and the President of the Immortals. Thus Hardy seems to have no definite system of fatalistic philosophy; the great force that rules the world seems with him to be an artistic device, borrowed from his models, the ancient Greek tragedies.

Happily, none of these peasant writers deals with peasant life in a pitying or sentimental way; there is no Dickens-like tearfulness in any of them. In her early introductions of peasant characters as in Jeanne, for example, George Sand dealt with her country girl in a somewhat moralizing way,depreciating the "upper classes" to which she is shown in contrast. The Pamela-like servant attitude isdropped in Mme. Sand's later productions and the peasant steps out in his true independent character. There is even an aloofness in certain of George Sand and George Eliot's characters, in their attitude toward strangers, against whom they had a strong prejudice. Of Adam Bede we are told,

"'He has an independence of spirit enough for two men - rather an excess of pride if anything.'"

Hardy shows an indifference to class distinctions. He does not treat the peasant as a wronged individual but rather as

a definite member of the social body. This, of course, is in accord with his prevailing, unprejudiced Trimmer's attitude toward the virtues and the vices of his fellows.

George Sand was, like her peasants, a Pantheist. She worshipped the living forces in the nature about her, Mathew Arnold set forth as the principal elements of her strain: "the cry of agony and revolt,a trust in nature and beauty, and the aspiration toward a purged and renewed human society." Her spiritual reaction then to the storm period of her mental history was to seize upon what Mr. Babbitt calls a "painless substitute for genuine spiritual effort." [1] She evidently thought that "to go out and mix one's self up with the landscape is the same as doing one's duty."

As a young woman, struggling amidst vague heterodox notions inculcated by Strauss, George Eliot, too, had taken refuge in an all-embracing Pantheism. The Puritanism in her nature, however, made her pause on the admonition," By their <u>fruits</u> ye shall know them;" she abandoned so vague a theory. The ideal religion of her peasants, then, so far as she attains an ideal, is the practical Methodist teaching of Dinah Morris. But, even then, the power of a personality is greater than her creed, and, had we not seen how noble Dinah really was, we might too, with Adam, "ha' thought a preaching woman hateful."

Hardy's peasant religion seems, too, to be measured by the standard of practicability. An "automatic orthodoxy" seems insufficient to Nature's children, "obviously unreal in lives

[1] Irving Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 286.

essentially naturalistic."[1] Although Tess went to church every Sunday, Angel Clare knew that, "the confused beliefs which she held, apparently imbibed in childhood, were, if anything, Tractarian as to phraseology and Pantheistic as to essence." Hardy's intense democracy would completely endorse no set creed. His position was rather that of Angel Clare among his orthodox brothers.

"Though the most appreciative humanist, the most ideal religionist, even the finest theologian and Christologist of the three, there was an alienation in the standing consciousness that his squareness would not fit the round hole that had been prepared for him."[2]

It must be admitted, too, that with Hardy's practical individual standards in religion, he had an artistic criterion which would admit him to the group of Christian aesthetes. Like Angel Clare, he felt "that it might have resulted far better for mankind if Greece had been the source of the religion of modern civilization, and not Palestine."

Finally, George Sand treats her peasants in a poetic, lyric fashion from within; to her they are picturesque, but loved friends. "I have been found fault with," she says, "for liking the peasantry. Among these I have passed my life, and as I have found them, so have I described them." George Eliot, however, although she knows her peasant folk, seems not to have made them her friends. They

[1] Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p. 185.
[2] Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p. 187

are to her interesting, merely from the point of view of one who would help them; George Sand loves them so impulsively and so sincerely that she expects love from them in return. It is perhaps the English rustic's inability to deal in abstractions, his instense concretness, that makes of him a suitable object for George Eliot's unimpassioned study. Hardy, I believe, uses the subjective method of dealing with his characters, but he avoids the idealization of their good qualities. He deals with the common man, in a classic way, - as Shakespeare dealt with men of higher station, - as a human will in conflict with itself and with the powers that be.

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